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ABSTRACT

A sampling of over 100 ideas submitted by elementary school teachers at the Idea Exchange at the annual meetings of the National Council of Teachers of English are contained in this collection of teaching tips. The first chapter, "Getting to Know Each Other," includes games to help students learn each other's names, directions for making a neighborhood map, instructions for assembling a directory of who's who at school, and a variety of autobiographical assignments. The activities in the second section, "Phonics and Syllabication," include "alphabet feet" and "vowel fingers," musical chairs, pictonames, board games, card games, target and team games, and a way of sampling the consonant blends with a food blender. The third section, "Sight Words and Reading," offers suggestions for the review and mastery of basic vocabulary, schemes for the organization of reading groups, exercises for skimming and intensive reading, and projects for several books. Word study, vocabulary development, and spelling activities are the focus of the fourth section, while the fifth section concentrates on activities for making and using dictionaries. The sixth section suggests ways to motivate and engage young writers at the prewriting stage. Tips for teaching grammar, usage, and punctuation are offered in the seventh section, and plans and formats for observation and evaluation in the eighth. The final section provides ideas and activities for the first and last 5 minutes of class time. (HOD)

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# Ideas for Teachers from Teachers

## Elementary Language Arts

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# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| *Foreword* | vii |
| 1. Getting to Know Each Other | 1 |
| 2. Phonics and Syllabication | 13 |
| 3. Sight Words and Reading | 23 |
| 4. Word Study, Vocabulary Development, and Spelling | 34 |
| 5. Making and Using Dictionaries | 43 |
| 6. Writing | 50 |
| 7. Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation | 70 |
| 8. Observing and Evaluating | 76 |
| 9. The First Five Minutes—and the Last | 86 |
| *Title Index* | 93 |

# Foreword

Teachers are course designers and curriculum builders, but teachers are also strategists who recognize that successful courses and curricula ultimately stand on six challenging and stimulating classroom hours every day. Ideas that deliver content in a lively fashion, however, are consumed at an astonishing rate, and teachers are perennially alert for new ones to adapt to their own teaching styles and goals.

The Idea Exchange at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English is one place where many teachers have found such ideas. For the past several years, hundreds of teachers have queued up at the Exchange, turning in teaching tips that work for them and receiving in return copies of the ideas submitted by their colleagues. Thus have fresh and useful ideas made their way from classroom to classroom and from coast to coast.

The Idea Exchange has been so popular that the NCTE Executive Committee decided some of this material should be available to a wider audience, in a more permanent form. This collection for elementary teachers, assembled at headquarters, provides a sampling of ideas from recent conventions. Although not all of the ideas submitted are included here, the book does suggest the range and variety of contributions. In addition, some ideas come from teachers who attended a workshop taught by Professor Thomas L. Clark at the University of Nevada. As he put it, "I was so impressed with the Idea Exchange that I stole the idea."

As teachers would have predicted, the largest number of contributions were concerned with the teaching of writing and reading. Smaller categories included getting to know each other in the classroom, making and using dictionaries, punctuation and grammar, and observing and evaluating. Some teachers were concerned with rationale and behavioral objectives; others responded with a no-fail writing assignment or a surefire activity for achieving attention during the first five minutes of class—or the last. All of this we have tried to represent in over one hundred activities arranged in nine chapters. Inclusive we could not be, but we hope

we have captured the character and spirit of the Idea Exchange—its camaraderie and good-natured pragmatism and its unselfish professionalism.

In a book like this one, it is appropriate to conclude the opening remarks with a word from one of its many contributors, Belinda Ann Bair of Bohemia Manor High School, Chesapeake City, Maryland:

> On my desk in an unobtrusive metal file box is the rescuer of the late-afternoon, just-before-holiday, harried teacher. In it are the little games as well as the more complex activities I have gleaned from NCTE Idea Exchanges through the years, from professional journals, and from the occasional wild inspiration that strikes. Some take only five or ten minutes but all are fun and practical. Begin your own collection now, a box you or your substitute can turn to when time is longer than lessons.

We have, then, taken Ms. Bair's idea and in the same spirit of sharing offer this book from our members to our members. We hope it will get new teachers off to a start on their idea collections while adding to the contents of well-worn boxes on the desks of old hands.

# 1 Getting to Know Each Other

Getting to know one another is a learning task that faces teachers and students alike every September, and it's often one that continues throughout the school year. Included in this section are games to help you and your students learn each other's names, directions for a neighborhood map, and instructions for assembling a directory of who's who at school. There's a writing assignment that asks older elementary students to revert to the good old days of show and tell, and others in which youngsters prepare a lifeline, assemble a peer biography, and create a family portrait. There are silhouettes to make—and to use in a variety of autobiographical assignments—and an interest inventory that will teach you a lot more about your students than their names.

### People Bingo

This beginning-of-the-year activity helps students get acquainted and learn each other's names. In advance, mimeograph bingo sheets with a grid containing four rows and four columns, for a total of sixteen squares. You'll also need paper clips, cardboard squares, or other bingo markers. Finally, write the name of each student on an individual slip of paper.

Distribute the bingo sheets and ask each student to write his or her name in the square at the top left corner. Students then walk around the classroom, introducing themselves to other students and obtaining signatures from fifteen of them for the remaining squares. When the sheets are filled, one name to a square, students return to their seats.

You (or a designated student) choose one of the name slips at random and call out the name. The student whose name has been called raises his or her hand. The other students take note of that student's identity. Students who have that name on their sheets cover it with a marker. Proceed as in any bingo game. When a

player calls "bingo," he or she must be able to match the four names in the horizontal, vertical, or diagonal row with the four correct people. By the end of the period everyone will have made new acquaintances and members of the class will be able to address one another by name. It's a beginning.

Karen Rezendes, Danbury, Connecticut

**Icebreaker**

Here's a get-acquainted game that helps to build a friendly feeling in the classroom. One student begins by giving his or her first name preceded by a word that begins with the same letter as the name: Curious Carol. The next student says, "You are Curious Carol and I am Just Jack." The game continues until all students have joined the chain, each student repeating in turn the names of those who preceded. To really break the ice, elect to be the last person in the chain and repeat all names correctly. You'll never forget them if you do!

Karen Rugerio, Orange County Administration Center, Orlando, Florida

**Class Tree**

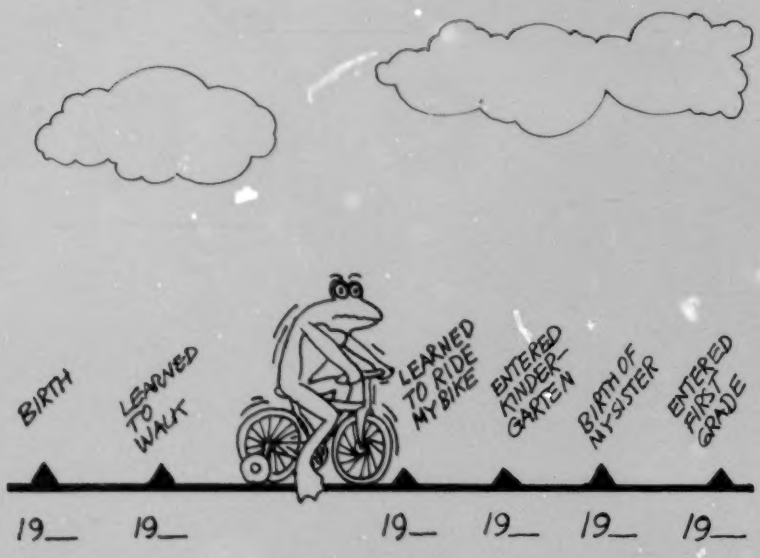
At the beginning of the school year I put the outline of a large tree on the bulletin board. Each child cuts out a leaf and prints his or her name on it. We have a little discussion about the meanings of names. I print each child's name on the chalkboard. We look up each name in dictionaries of personal names, writing the meaning beside the name. Students then copy the meaning of their names on their leaves. We conclude by putting the leaves on the class tree.

Julie Anne Arnold, Rose Warren Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Lifeline**

This assignment works well with fourth- through sixth-graders and helps youngsters recognize that we all experience certain predictable events (learning to walk, entering school, celebrating birthdays) as well as certain unpredictable events (accidents, family relocations).

Explain that each student will make a lifeline of his or her very own by plotting the dates of important events. For example,




Provide long strips of paper or tagboard and have students draft their lifelines in pencil, including events they remember or have heard that seem important to them. Encourage them to talk to each other and to share ideas.

Assemble in a group and ask students to note events that all or most of them have recorded on their lifelines and events that seem unique to one person. Help them to conclude that we have much in common with each other and much that is unique.

When students are confident that they have thought of all important lifeline events and put them in the correct order, they complete and illustrate their lifelines with crayons or felt-tip markers.

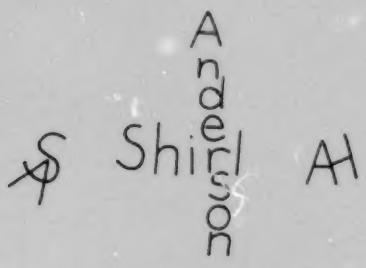
As follow-up activities, ask students to use their lifelines to complete in writing sentences like the following: The happiest (saddest, scariest, funniest, angriest) memory I have is . . . Allow students to add to their lifelines when they remember something that now seems important to them. Ask students to write down what they predict will be on all of their lifelines in the future. What events do they hope to find recorded?

Mary Jane Hanson, Harrison Open School, Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Name Brain Drain**

Names are important! Fitting into a new classroom is important. My students and I like to begin the school year by examining our names. Here are some of the activities I use with fifth-graders, but most of them are fun for youngsters of any age.

1. Students write their initials and names in new and different ways.




2. Students write positive thoughts using the letters in their names. Letters used don't need to be initial ones.

3. Students look up the meanings of their first and middle names and last names where possible. Baby books and special dictionaries of names are helpful resources.
4. Students design logos for themselves or for each other.
5. Students print their names on a sheet of paper in as many different styles as possible. Have on hand books that illustrate typefaces to get this activity started.

6. Distribute gummed paper. Students make name labels in different sizes and shapes. These can be stuck on many items —for identification or for fun.
7. Post a class picture on the bulletin board. Each student creates a name label to post under the picture.
8. Students write their names in code for classmates to decode. They will have no trouble inventing codes!
9. Students use their names or initials to create a picture or mobile or other art project.

10. Provide stencils, rubber stamps and ink pads, label makers, colored pens, cut-out letters, old magazines, fabric scraps, yarn. Declare a name brain drain during which each student creates "something" based on his or her name.

Shirl Anderson, Myrtle Tate Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Class Map**

If your school is located in a city, you'll need a city map. If you teach in a rural area, you'll need a township or county map. You'll also need map pins and yarn. Tack the map to a large bulletin board. Help students find the streets or roads on which they live and approximately where their homes are located. Mark the spot with a map pin. Attach yarn to the pin and stretch the yarn to a point on the bulletin board outside the boundary of the map. Fasten it with a second pin. Each student then draws a picture of his or her home and family and places it at the point where the yarn ends. Paragraphs of introduction or description may also be added.

Belinda Davis, Andrew Mitchell Elementary School, Boulder City, Nevada

**Who's Who at School**

When students first come to school, they don't know the people who make up the "system." I suggest that a directory be made for them. For the first-grader it might include principal, secretary, librarian, teacher aides, classroom teachers, special education teachers, and custodian. Directories for students in higher grades might include the superintendent, assistant superintendent, board members, and others who make up the school system. These directories also help parents understand who's who at school.

Ann Redemann, Halle Hewetson Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**What's in a Name?**

Ask each student to print his or her name on a sheet of unlined paper. Students then page through magazines to find pictures of objects that begin with the letters in their names. For example, S (sandwich), A (apple), M (money). These pictures are cut out and pasted beside the appropriate letters of the child's name. Encourage youngsters to help each other, especially with longer names or more difficult letter-picture matches. Finally, each child makes up a sentence using the words found to represent the letters in his or her name. For example, Sam spent money for an apple and a sandwich.

The Kindergarten at Sunrise Acres Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

My second-graders think up or look up words that begin with each letter in their names. They can choose which name—first, middle, or last—they want to use or use each in turn. Then they write one sentence about themselves—or about anything—using the words they have found. The words must, however, follow the order of the letters in their names. For example, Sarah—*S*arah *a*te *r*ipe *a*pples *h*ungrily.

Sammie McCraw, C. H. Decker Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

I begin this activity by talking with my fourth-graders about how they got their names, whether or not they like them, and what their

names mean. Students then write their first names coupled with two adjectives (encourage positive ones) that begin with the same letter: Smiling, Sensitive Samantha. Next I ask them to use their dictionaries to find five (six? seven?) other appropriate adjectives to make the list even longer. I also introduce the term *alliteration.*

To conclude the activity, each student picks the one adjective he or she likes best and chooses an animal whose name begins with the same letter. The student then uses the three words together—adjective, name, animal—Smiling Samantha Skunk—as the name for a cartoon character that he or she invents, illustrates, and posts on our bulletin board.

P.S. Don't throw away those other adjectives. They can be used for mobiles, in poetry lessons, for alphabetizing exercises.

Hope Goffstein, Laura Dearing Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Roses by Other Names**

Children are fascinated by names—their names, their parents' names, the names of their pets. The name a person or object has often influences the way we see that person or object. Children are also fascinated by cartoons. How would the image of Superman, for example, change if his name were Greatman? Does Charlie Brown's name have special significance? Would Snoopy be Snoopy if we called him Ranger? Encourage youngsters to come up with new names for favorite cartoon characters. Do the names change the characters? Bring in books with pictures of creatures, real and fanciful, and ask the class to provide names for them. Ask students to draw their own creatures and name them appropriately.

Nancy Hest, Lois Craig Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

Begin by reading *Liza Lou* by Mercer Mayer because nicknames are used. Go on to discuss nicknames, how and why we acquire them. Ask students to choose nicknames for themselves and to explain their choices. If there's time, ask them to provide nicknames for each other—and for you—and to explain them.

Rosemary Holmes-Gull, Paul E. Culley Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Show and Tell—and Write

As part of an autobiography unit, our students revert to the good old days of Show and Tell. Each student brings an object that he or she valued as a young child. After sharing stories about these objects in class, students begin to write. We distribute the prewriting guide that follows:

> Here are questions about your special object for you to answer in writing. Thinking about these questions and answering them as completely as you can will help you to write about your object in a special way.
>
> 1. Write at least three phrases to describe it.
> 2. Does it have a name? If so, why/how was its name selected?
> 3. Was it something you had wanted? Explain.
> 4. How does it make you feel?
> 5. What did you do with it when you first got it?
> 6. Do you use it now? How?
> 7. Where do you keep it now? Why do you keep it there?
> 8. Is it different now from when you first got it? If so, how is it different or why is it different?
> 9. What do you especially like or enjoy about it?
> 10. Can you tell a story in which your object is important?

And here is a sample paragraph written by one of our students.

> My teddy bear was very important to me because he was my real friend. Since I had always wanted a real animal, I treated him like one. I respected him. I never threw him around. I always played gently with him. When I slept in my crib, he slept next to me. However, since I tossed and turned during the night, he was never there in the morning. When I realized that he was gone, I cried because I had lost my best friend. Then my mother picked him up. Ahhh! Happiness was finding my friend again.

Eileen Morris and Carol Seldin, University of Chicago Lab Schools, Chicago, Illinois

### Silhouette Stimulus

You will need large (18″ × 24″) sheets of black construction paper, masking tape, scissors, and a bright light source such as a film or overhead projector. Depending upon the manual dexterity of students, you may want to use scrap paper for some trial-and-error experimentation.

*Process*

1. Divide the class into groups of three—one student to pose, one to hold, and one to trace. While every student will be positive that he or she can sit still for the few moments it takes to trace the outline of his or her head, in fact, the silhouettes will be better if a student stands behind the poser and holds the head.
2. Have the poser sit close to the wall and about two or three feet from the light source. Position the paper and tape it to the wall. You'll discover that it's easier to move the paper than the student.
3. Have the tracer outline the shadow in pencil so that the shiny line shows later on the black construction paper. Hair is especially important in making a silhouette look like the poser. Be sure students do not cut off the necks of their silhouettes or they won't be happy with the results.
4. After three students have posed, held, and drawn, they turn the light over to the next group while they carefully cut out their silhouettes.

*Product*

These silhouettes can be used as backgounds, covers, or poster art for a number of autobiographical writing assignments. Here are several that my students have enjoyed.

1. Parts of speech: List adjectives (nouns or verbs) that describe you and your interests.
2. Poems of wishes and dreams.
3. Points of view: In one column put words that you would choose to describe yourself; in another put words that parents, teachers, brothers and sisters, friends would choose.
4. Appearance and reality: Use a piece of paper pasted to one side of the silhouette to describe the way you seem to be and another on the other side of the silhouette to describe the way you really are. (I seem to be a frightened tiger kitten. In reality, I'm a raging tiger.)
5. Summary of important events of a week, month, year.

Marj Montgomery, Day Junior High School, Newtonville, Massachusetts

### Peer Biographies

This exercise develops interviewing and writing skills. I try to use it soon after the opening of school because it helps students get to know one another.

I begin by discussing with students what biography is and how it differs from autobiography. I read sample passages from anthologies and magazines. Then the class compiles questions students might ask if they were to write a biography of another student.

I assign partners (boy and girl work well) and have them interview one another for the purpose of writing a biography. I try to pair students who don't know one another well. I reserve about fifteen minutes on three or four separate days so there's time for follow-up questions and last-minute bright ideas. If more information is needed, students phone each other.

We share the biographies in class. Sometimes I read them, leaving out the names, and have students try to guess whose biography is being read. Later, students rewrite them on ditto masters and we assemble booklets so that each student has a copy.

Gloria Heisler, South Kingstown Junior High School, Wakefield, Rhode Island

### Family Portraits

Assemble a collection of magazines, newspapers, catalogs, maps, travel brochures, picture pamphlets, and the like. You will also need scissors, paste, and colored paper.

Ask students to think for a few minutes about the members of their families: what they like to do; where they come from; foods they enjoy; celebrations they share; hobbies, sports, and just about anything that would describe them to someone else. Give them the opportunity to share their descriptive words and phrases as you write them on the board. Join in with your ideas as well; in fact, this activity is enhanced if you participate at every step—from brainstorming to collage to composition.

Now ask students to list family members (including themselves) across the top of a sheet of paper, one column for each family member. Keep in mind that families differ and be receptive to single-parent families or family units based on guardians or grandparents. Students then list words or phrases from the chalkboard

that describe individual members of their families. They may, of course, add to these lists of descriptors as they work.

Students now move to the picture collection, looking for and cutting out pictures that illustrate the descriptors they have chosen to use in their family outlines. If a student finds a picture that illustrates a characteristic not on the outline, the student adds the appropriate word or phrase to the outline. When the picture collections are complete, use yours to demonstrate how to create a family collage. To preserve these collages, spray them with a fixative or cover them with clear plastic.

Students now begin writing about their families from the information on their outlines. Discuss the purpose and audience for this work—to introduce your family to classmates and to the families of classmates. Write your own rough draft at this time, but be available to students who are having difficulties. Allow time for students to read their rough drafts to each other before revising and assist with revision through individual conferences if possible.

Finished compositions can be typed or handwritten on ditto masters. Reproduce a copy for each member of the class. Each student uses his or her family collage as the cover for a booklet that contains a copy of each student's composition. Both students and their families seem to enjoy reading these booklets, and this sharing makes the classroom a warmer, more friendly place.

Charles Williams, Carol Hittleman, Gloria Lang, and Jay Finello, Huntington Public Schools, Huntington, New York

**Interest Inventory**

An interest inventory identifies general interests as well as reading interests and can be used to initiate and extend informal teacher/student discussions. I administer an inventory similar to the one shown below to students at the beginning of the school year. It's a way to discover and develop their reading and writing interests and it provides an informal analysis and a basis for further exploration.

Name _____ Age _____

1. What do you like to do after school?
2. What do you do indoors when it rains?
3. What hobbies or collections do you have?
4. Do you have a pet? What?

5. What are your favorite television shows?
6. What games or sports do you like best?
7. To what clubs or other groups do you belong?
8. What is your favorite type of movie?
9. Do you have a public library card? If so, how often do you go to the library?
10. Do you own books? What are some of them?
11. What things do you like to read about?
12. Do you subscribe to any magazines at home? Which ones?
13. Name a book you would like to read again. Why?
14. Do you read the newspaper? How often? Which section do you read first?
15. Do you talk to your friends about the books you have read or are reading?
16. Do you use books to help answer questions you have?
17. Do you like to read aloud in class?
18. Where is your favorite place to read?
19. Do you like to write about what you read?
20. Do you think that you are a good reader for your age?

Suzanne Irwin and Nancy A. Wrzesinski, Irving School, Lorain, Ohio

# 2 Phonics and Syllabication

First-grade teachers can all recall a child like the six-year-old who looked at her first purple-dittoed phonics exercise and sighed, "Now comes the hard part of first grade." Activities in this section, however, are likely to involve more than pencils—alphabet feet and vowel fingers, musical chairs, pictonames, and a three-step staircase. There are board games and card games, target and team games, and even a way of sampling the consonant blends with a food blender.

### Alphabet Feet and Vowel Fingers

Cut out fifty-two footprint patterns. On twenty-six, write the capital letters; on the other twenty-six, write the lowercase letters. Children enjoy putting these on the floor, matching capital and lowercase letters to make a path.

Mark each child's fingers on one hand with either the long or short vowel sounds. Children then point to the correct vowel sound as you pronounce specific words.

Roxy Voorhees, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pierre, South Dakota

### All the Words That Are Fit to Print

This activity provides first-graders with practice in letter identification and initial consonant sounds. Give each child a newspaper or magazine and ask the child to cut out words that begin with a given letter, *F* for example. After the words are cut out, they may be pasted on a sheet of paper. Choose a word from each child's collection, look it up in the dictionary, and explain its meaning. Ask the class to help you use it in a variety of sentences.

Lisa Hahn, Halle Hewetson Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

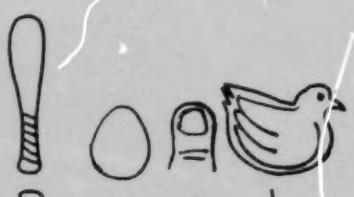
### Pen Pin Pan Pun

Use the familiar circle game Musical Chairs to reinforce listening skills and the ability to recognize rhyming words or to identify initial or final consonant sounds or medial vowels. Arrange all student chairs but one in a circle facing out. Announce, "Merry-go-round, go!" Youngsters march around the chairs while you call off words from a list compiled for the designated skill. When students hear a word that does not belong on the list, they sit down. The child who does not get a chair goes to the center of the circle. One chair is removed before the game resumes.

Marcia Eggers, Crestwood Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Pictonames

Ask students to print their names on sheets of newsprint. Above each letter sketch a familiar object that begins with that letter. For example: bat, egg, toe, and hen.



Your sketch demonstrates that every letter in the student's name is a "take-off" for another word. Now ask the youngster to draw pictures below each letter. For example: boy, elephant, top, and hat.

Cut or fold the newsprint so that only the "pictonames" show and ask the children to "read" each other's names. If there's time, write the names of your students on slips of paper. Each student draws a slip and makes a picture representation for that name. Hold these up one at a time and ask the class to decode each name. If this activity is done early in the year, pictonames can be put on tagboard and hung as name tags from students' desks.

Ann Redemann, Halle Hewetson Elementary School, and Marie M. Meehan, J.M. Ullom Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Three-Step Staircase**

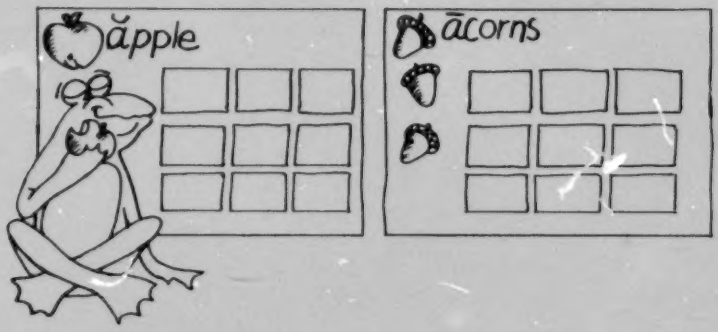
You'll need a collection of picture rhymes (bat, hat, and cat; tree, bee, and knee) for this game, a flannel board, and yarn. Use a piece of yarn to make a three-step staircase on the flannel board. On two of the steps place pictures that rhyme (tree and bee); on a third put one that does not (cat). The child goes up the stairs, naming each picture and deciding which words rhyme and which word does not. The child then picks the next player. Three-step staircase can also be used with antonyms or synonyms or with long and short vowel sounds or initial consonants.

Lisa Hahn, Halle Hewetson Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**The Long and the Short of It**

This game provides practice in discriminating between the long and short sounds of the letter *a* and can be extended to other vowel sounds. It may be played as an individual sorting game or by teams as described below.

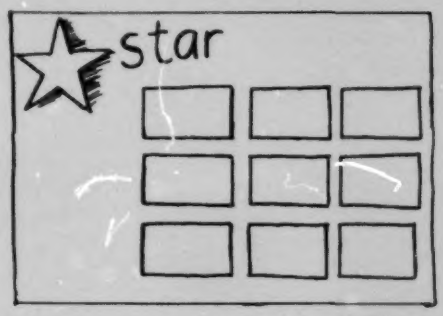
Cut two tagboard rectangles about 8″ × 14″. Designate with a word and a picture cue which is the short *a* playing board and which the long. Outline nine 1½″ × 2″ rectangles on each playing board. Like this.




Now make twenty-six 1½″ × 2″ word cards, thirteen with short *a* words and thirteen with long *a* words.

Divide the group into two teams and give each team a playing board. Each team should review the vowel sound it will monitor. Mix the word cards and spread them facedown in the center of the table. Play alternates between the two teams, with each player in turn selecting a word card and turning it over so that all may see the word. The player then pronounces the word aloud, for example, "made," and decides whether the sound of *a* in that word matches the sound on the team's playing board. If it does, the player places the word card on one of the rectangles. If the sounds do not match, the student turns the card over and mixes it with the others on the table. When a student places a card on the board incorrectly, the card is awarded to the opposing team. The game ends when one team fills the nine boxes on its playing board.

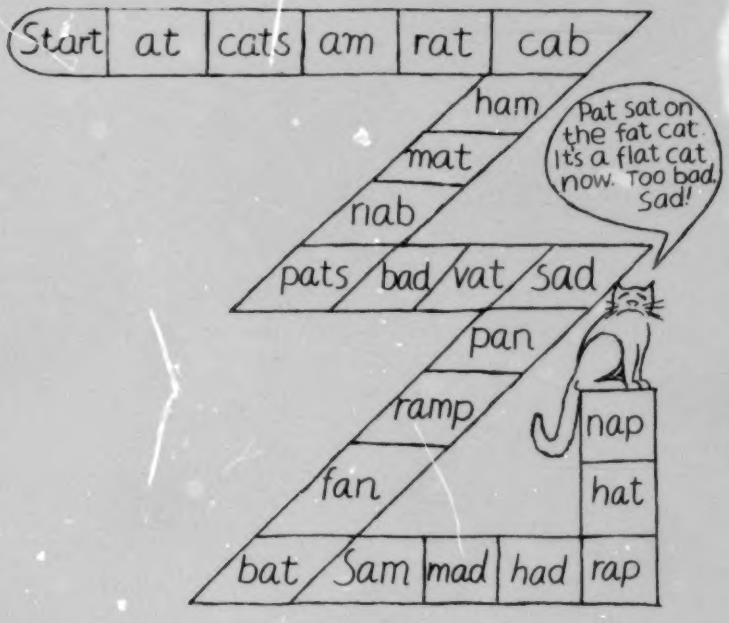
The game may be varied by adding a third team card, such as the one shown below. Cards for other vowel sounds may also be made: two cards for the sounds of *oo*, two for the sounds of *ow*, one card for the *oi* and *oy* sound as in *oil* and *boy*, one for the *ou* and *ow* sound as in *out* and *cow*.




Carolyn Lyles, Woerther Elementary School, Ballwin, Missouri

**Follow the Yellow Brick Road**

Draw a zigzag road on a ditto sheet and divide the road into sections. Reproduce a number of these sheets and use them to make review games for short and long vowel sounds. For example, fill in the sections with short *a* words as shown below. You might end with a short *a* "story."

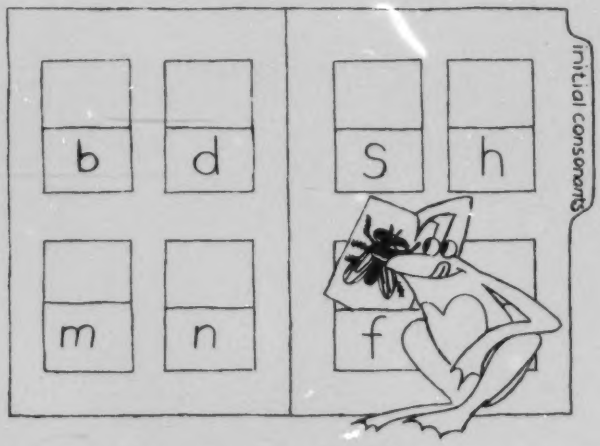


Students play with a partner and need a die and two markers—paper clips will do. The first player throws the die and moves the clip the number of spaces shown. However, the player must read each word correctly as the marker passes, including the word on which the marker lands. If the student misses a word, the marker is placed on the last word correctly pronounced. The first student to reach the end of the road wins.

Marie E. Meehan, J.M. Ullom Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Consonant Kangaroo**

You'll need file folders, index cards, and library book pockets for this activity. Paste eight pockets inside each folder. Print a consonant letter your first-graders have studied on each pocket. Like this:




Now cut from magazines and catalogs pictures of familiar objects the names of which begin with the consonants you have chosen. Paste each picture on a card cut to fit the pocket. More advanced students will enjoy making these cards for you if you set up a consonant corner for them to work in when they have free time.

To play the game a student picks a card, identifies the picture, and puts it into the correct pocket, matching initial consonant sounds.

Julie Anne Arnold, Rose Warren Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Sampling the Consonant Blends

When I introduce the blends to first-graders, I bring a blender and several oranges and bananas from home. We talk about orange juice and how it tastes. Then we talk about bananas and their taste. After blending orange juice and bananas together, everyone gets a drink. We discuss the new taste—noting that you still get a taste of orange juice and a taste of banana. Then I relate this experience to the blends—you can still hear a trace of each letter but the blend has a brand new sound. A puzzle game is the follow-up.

Cut from magazines and old workbooks pictures of familiar objects the names of which begin with blends and paste each one on a small rectangle of tagboard. Use a felt-tip pen to print each name *across its picture.* Cut each rectangle apart with the blend on one piece and the rest of the word on the other. The pictures help youngsters put the puzzles together correctly as they sound out words like *drapes, truck, plate, grapes,* and *flower.*

Marge Chilton, Doris Hancock Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Viwol Chengos

I ask my second-graders to print their first and last names on a sheet of paper, for example, Barbara Johnson. Students then change the vowels in their names and write their new names on a large index card, for example, Berbiro Jehnsin. I hold each card up for the class to read—and to guess whose name it is. When a name is guessed, that student stands up. This activity helps us to get acquainted at the beginning of the school year—and to review the vowel sounds.

Margie Ripplinger, Doris French Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Consonant Chains

Students strengthen their perception of beginning and ending consonant sounds by playing that old favorite "I'm Going on a Trip." Students divide into groups of five or six and sit in a circle on the floor. One student begins by saying, "I'm going on a trip and I'll take a (cat) ." The next student in the circle responds

by repeating the first item and adding a second that begins with the ending sound of the first: "I'm going on a trip and I will take a cat and a (top) ." Play continues around the circle in this manner with the consonant chain growing until no child can repeat it without error. "Going on a Trip" is also good for developing listening and memory skills.

Nancy Hest, Lois Craig Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

**Syllable Race**

Write syllables from the following word list or from a list of your own on large file cards or cards made from tagboard.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| hap | sur | air | gar | but |
| py | prise | plane | bage | ter |
| bit | sum | hid | doc | tur |
| ter | mer | den | tor | key |
| fun | wind | rab | cor | scis |
| ny | mill | bit | ner | sors |

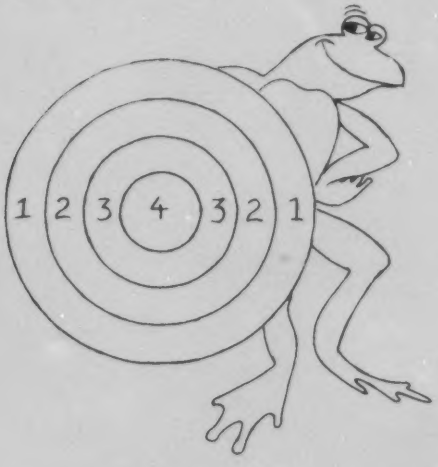
Use this deck in an individual activity by asking the child to use the syllable cards to make as many words as possible. The game can be made self-correcting by coding the back of each card. Alternately, the deck can be used to play a pairing game following the format of Old Maid. Finally, the game can be played as a relay. The first player on each team comes to a line about ten feet from the chalkboard. Display on the chalk rack four of the syllable cards: two of these must form a word; the other two are distractors and cannot be used to form a word. Players race to arrange the syllable cards to form a word. The first player to do so scores a point for his or her team. Continue until all players have had at least one turn. Three-, four-, and more-syllable words may be used for older players and a more difficult game.

Merrily P. Hansen, New York, New York

**Targeting Syllables**

Here is an activity that involves coordination and fast thinking and is enjoyed by my fourth-graders. It may be played by teams or individuals.

Make a target from construction paper or tagboard similar to the one shown below. Make three or four if you want the entire class to play without restless waiting.




Lay the target on the floor and play the game by tossing tokens or coins. If a token lands in number 4, the student must give a four-syllable word; for this he or she scores four points. The student gives a three-syllable word if the token lands in number 3, scoring three points, and so on. The same word may not be used twice during the game. After a specified time, the team or individual with the most points wins.

If you like, offer a bonus point for the correct spelling of words that you declare "spelling monsters."

Diane Ng, Helen Marie Smith Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Syl' lable Stress**

Teaching syllable stress or accent has always been a difficult task for me, probably because so many students (and teachers?) don't hear or feel this stress naturally. I think I'm having more success since I began to attack the problem with more diverse "weapons." After covering the basic textbook lessons, I try these tricks.

1. Create syllable-stress categories into which all one-, two-, and three-syllable words will fall. For example:

| *Ten* | *Sev'* en | Ju *ly'* |
|---|---|---|
| *plant* | *par'* ty | be *gin'* |
| *yes* | *ta'* ble | for *give'* |
| *cold* | *end'* ing | ga *rage'* |
| *Sev'* en ty | E *lev'* en | Twen ty *one'* |
| *gath'* er ing | per *for'* mance | un der *stand'* |
| *won'* der ful | at *ten'* tion | dis ap *point'* |
| *quar'* ter back | un *cov'* er | rec om *mend'* |

Test these categories with students by using whatever words come to mind. Use first and last names of students and other friendly words.

2. Build syllable stress strings. Students write one-, two-, and three-syllable words on 2″ × 2″ tags, categorize them (first as a class, then in small groups, then individually), and staple them to the appropriate syllable stress string (one string for each category). Encourage daily contributions, and check them at the end of class for accuracy. Buzz out bloopers—odd words that don't fit seem to pop out when a list is read orally and words are heard in rapid succession.
3. Perhaps a syllable stress string race is in order. Each team draws a category and seeks to surpass the strings of the other teams, or the whole class may rise to the challenge of keeping the strings *equal* in length. Lagging and sagging strings can be announced and word-nominees sought.

Lynn Genter, Woodbury Elementary School, Woodbury, Minnesota

# 3 Sight Words and Reading

Sight-word flowers and caterpillars to take home and card games to play at school are among the suggestions for the review and mastery of basic vocabulary. "Reading" brand names is offered as a way for beginning readers to achieve instant success. There's a scheme for organizing reading groups within the classroom to ensure that each youngster works once with the teacher, once independently, and once at an activity center. Storytelling pencils and illuminated letters help to involve young readers in a personal way with their story favorites. There's an exercise for skimming and one for the intensive reading of a four-inch square on a road map. Projects are described for an annual balloon day patterned after Carolyn Haywood's *Away Went the Balloons*, for a week of Tomten secrets based on Astrid Lindgren's Tomten books, for a Super Bowl reading runoff, and for a school- or communitywide children's author day.

### Brand Name Bonus

Children want very much to "learn to read" on the first day of first grade. Most of them already recognize brand names from advertising. List on tagboard or at the chalkboard products well known to children such as Kool-aid, Cocoa Puffs, Dr. Pepper, Hershey, Campbell's for those who recognize them to "read." Then match empty boxes, bottles, and cans to each brand name so that all children will be able to "read" the list. They will go home on the first day announcing proudly, "I can read!"

Marge Chilton, Doris Hancock Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Say It with Flowers

As kindergarten and first-graders are introduced to their first reading books, keep track of the new words they master by creating a word garden on your bulletin board. I use this title at the

top: "Watch our flowers grow." And this text at the bottom: "The more you read, the more you know."

Each child begins with the center of a flower on which I write the child's name and the title of the book he or she is reading. Each new word mastered is written on a petal which the child pins around the flower's center. When seven or eight words are mastered, the child glues the petals in place and the flower is complete. When the book is finished, the child takes home the corresponding flowers.

This activity can also be done with word caterpillars. On the head, write the child's name and the title of the book. Write each word mastered on a segment of the body. Flowers and caterpillars are an easy way to review sight vocabulary in the classroom and you can be virtually certain that parents will ask for a reading at home.

Angela Stervinou, Port Royal School, Southhampton, Bermuda

### If You're Happy and You Know It, Then Your Face Will Surely Show It

You'll need a deck of at least twenty-five cards containing basic sight words for a group of three or four youngsters. In addition, make five cards with a sad face on each. Shuffle the cards and place them facedown on the table. Each child in turn picks up a card and pronounces the word shown there. The child continues to draw cards until he or she misses a word or draws a sad face. The object is to call out as many words as possible before drawing a sad face or missing a word.

If you make several decks covering a basic one- or two-hundred words, groups may exchange decks and the whole class can play at the same time.

Debra J. Williams, Walter Bracken Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Word Card Rummy

This card game can be played by a group of four or five children, so you may want to make enough decks so that everyone in your class can play at the same time.

To make a thirty-card deck, draw three pictures of each of the following on cards: apple, flower, bird, house, tree, ball, wagon,

cat, dog, and hat. The pictures need not be identical. Now print a different word on each card. Choose these from a basic word list for the grade you are teaching or from current reading material your students are mastering.

The cards are shuffled and each child receives three cards. The remainder of the deck is placed facedown on the table. The object of the game is to collect a set of three cards (three trees, for example) *and to read the words printed on the cards as well.* To play the game, the first child asks another if he or she has a given picture—a flower, for example. If the child has, he or she gives it to the child who requested it. The child receiving the card must pronounce the word correctly or forfeit the card. The child then draws one card from the pile. The next child in turn asks for a picture he or she needs to complete a set of three, and the game continues until one child is out of cards or until all cards are matched.

Betty Moore, Gordon McCaw Elementary School, Henderson, Nevada

**As the Wheel Turns**

I have reading groups on three levels in my second-grade classroom and use a rotation system based on two wheels that are easily interpreted by youngsters. The first wheel, shown below, is moved three times during the daily reading period. By the end of the period, students in each of the three groups (Pooh, Tigger, and

Eeyore) have worked once at the table with me, once at the activity center, and once at their desks.

When a reading group moves to the activity center, it is subdivided into five groups (A through E), as shown on the chart below. Five activities are available at the center and each youngster completes the activity scheduled that day on the activity wheel for his or her letter group. The wheel at the activity center is turned each day. By the end of the week, each child has had an opportunity to complete all five activities. Each week the five activities are changed.

| GROUP | A | B | C | D | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pooh | John<br>Carol | Lisa<br>Sherry | Shane<br>Ned | Mike<br>Debbie | Tony<br>Jennifer |
| Tigger | | | | | |
| Eeyore | | | | | |

Jeanne Fridell, Lincoln Elementary School, Ottawa, Kansas

**Storytelling Pencils**

This activity helps to involve youngsters from kindergarten through third grade in your storytelling. You'll need a copy of Wanda Gag's classic, *Millions of Cats*,, an overhead projector, grease pencils, and 8½" × 11" transparencies. Heavyweight transparencies work better with younger children.

Begin by asking about all the different kinds of cats the children have had and have seen. Try for as many descriptive details as possible. Go on to encourage a wide range of imaginative responses —striped cats, polka-dot cats, fat cats, skinny cats, cats on roller skates.

Introduce the grease pencils and transparencies and demonstrate how to use them. Have each child draw as many different kinds of cats on a transparency as he or she wishes. Collect the drawings.

Tell the story of *Millions of Cats*, using the children's drawings. To emphasize "hundreds of cats, thousands of cats, millions and billions and trillions of cats," layer the transparencies one on top of the other; move them around for the fight scene.

Any cumulative folktale *(Henny Penny, The Little Red Hen, This Is the House That Jack Built)* is suitable for this technique as are these books:

Burningham, J., *Mr. Grumpy's Outing* (progression of animals)

Burton, V.L., *The Little House* (buildings grow into a city)

Eastman, P., *Are You My Mother?* (various machines)

Geisel, T.S., *And to Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (students add to the parade)

Lionni, L., *The Biggest House in the World* (larger and larger houses)

Lionni, L., *Little Blue and Little Yellow* (overlays of blue and yellow to make green)

Dolly Cinquino, Glen Rock Public Schools, Glen Rock, New Jersey

**Illuminating**

Bring to class examples of illuminated letters—medieval and modern. Then ask students to select a favorite book and design an illuminated letter for the first word in a favorite chapter. One

illumination that I particularly remember was a monkey-laden *H* designed by a fourth-grader for the Howler monkey chapter of *Wonders of the Monkey World* by Jacquelyn Berrill. This is an activity that should appeal to students from elementary school right through junior and senior high school and might be done with English and art teachers cooperating.

Bill Bissell, George E. Harris Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Skimmers

This game helps my fifth-graders learn to skim for detail. Laminate grocery ads onto 8″ × 10″ cards or tack them on a bulletin board. Devise ten questions on the items and their prices and write them on another card. Assign partners.

One student scans the ad and writes down the appropriate sale prices or other information requested on the card. The time taken to complete this task is recorded in seconds by the other student. Then the process is reversed, and time and accuracy compared. The skimming game can be repeated for several rounds if you devise several question cards.

Jeanne Hartmans, Paul E. Culley Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Exploring Four Inches

You'll need several road maps for this activity. Students may work alone or with partners. Outline a four-inch square on a road map for each player or twosome. At least two or three squares may be drawn on each map. Spread the maps out on the floor and ask students to list all the information they can find within their designated squares. Keep a list of items found and discuss the results of these mini-explorations.

Debra J. Williams, Walter Bracken Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Up, Up, and Away: Balloon Day at White Bear Lake

Second-graders at our school recently took part in a first annual balloon day patterned after the book *Away Went the Balloons* by

Carolyn Haywood. After the successful launching, we are sure our youngsters will always remember this title and author.

In preparation for the event, I read aloud the first chapter of the book to each class during its weekly time in the media center. Classroom teachers finished reading the book with their individual classes before the big day. We asked our PTO for funds to pay for the helium and the balloons (special balloons are available at McDonald's at nominal cost), and room mothers came to fill them. Each student wrote a note to attach to the string of his or her balloon, including the school address and the launcher's name. We hoped, as in the book, that people would find our balloons and write back.

Balloon day dawned cold, but with a steady, strong wind. In the afternoon everyone gathered on the athletic field and counted down in unison. Suddenly eighty yellow balloons filled the sky and were carried up and away in a southeasterly direction. A photographer from the *White Bear Press* took pictures for the paper.

The balloon that traveled farthest was found near Rochester by a tenth-grade boy who wrote a letter to the youngster who had launched it. As students got responses, these became part of a hallway display that told the school the story of the second-grade balloon day.

Clare Hibbard, Lincoln School, White Bear Lake, Minnesota

**Tomten Secrets**

Youngsters in grades two through four are almost certain to enjoy this activity. Begin by reading aloud *The Tomten* or *The Tomten and the Fox* by Astrid Lindgren. The Tomten, a delightful gnome-like creature, then becomes the motivating force in the following activity that emphasizes writing and group interaction.

December is a perfect month for Tomtens, but they can appear at any season. I usually have youngsters draw names on Friday, then I set up a schedule something like this. On Monday, everyone receives a letter that gives a hint about his or her secret Tomten; on Tuesday, a poem; on Wednesday, a postcard; on Thursday, a riddle or other clue to Tomten identity; and on Friday, an item made by Tomten. You may want to schedule class time to talk about the various writing projects and about the thoughtfulness of Tomtens who don't forget. Writing may be completed at school, but Tomten identities are more likely to be kept secret when writing is done at home. I provide a basket for collecting Tomten

communications each day, and I schedule a time for passing them out. On the final day we gather together to make guesses about the identities of our secret Tomtens.

Lois Schoeneck, Damon Runyon School, Littleton, Colorado

### Not Only the Names Have Been Changed

This activity helps elementary school students appreciate the interdependence of character, plot, and setting and also generates some highly creative story variations. Each child may write or tell a story or students may work together in small groups.

Select with youngsters one or more characters and a setting—these will remain constant in everyone's story. The variation will be "a package." Change the characteristics of this package for each child or small group and discover how the plots change as the packages change. Suggested packages: plain brown wrapper, crated, outer wrapping battered and torn, holes for a living creature, package marked "Return to sender" or "Do not open" or "Open with care" or "Do not open until Christmas." Other changes can have to do with size, shape, method of delivery.

The activity may be repeated, keeping two other aspects constant but changing a third. For example, cut a picture from the *National Geographic* to serve as the setting for everyone's story but change the age, sex, or personality of the main character for each child. Or keep the characters constant and give each child a picture of a different setting.

Marilyn Lathrop, Ella Canavan School, Medina, Ohio

### Super Bowl Readers

To encourage independent reading I run a football read-off from September to the Super Bowl in January, at which time I award small prizes to high scorers.

Set aside a bulletin board on which you lay out a football field. Get help from the class for a more creative design than you might invent: yard lines laid out with string or paper strips, end zones in vivid yellow, astroturf from indoor/outdoor carpeting! Each student needs a paper football labeled with his or her name. You'll also need a supply of book-check cards to verify that students have read the books that enable them to gain yards for a touchdown. I

generally ask for title, author, setting, major characters, brief retelling of the part liked least or the part liked best, but card requirements vary from one week or month to the next.

For each book read, the student fills out a book-check card. When you are satisfied that the student has completed the book, put his or her football on the ten-yard line. Each time the student hands in an acceptable card, he or she advances another ten yards. If you like, grant bonus yards for especially well-done cards. Keep track of all touchdowns as students advance down the field. In January, declare your Super Bowl readers. Paperbacks make good trophies.

Nancy Y. Ottman, T. Edwards Junior High School, South Windsor, Connecticut

**Author! Author!**

Author Day is an exciting way to motivate students to read and write enthusiastically. On such a day young people meet a contemporary author. Students plan the program during the previous month in English classes. Their preparation includes the following:

1. Reading books by the author
2. Preparing questions to ask the author
3. Finding biographical information about the author and reviews or critical material on his or her writing
4. Writing an introduction of the author
5. Writing invitations to administrators, librarians, and other interested persons
6. Writing publicity for local and school newspapers
7. Creating art work and book displays for Author Day

Following the program, students write thank-you letters to the author, and many have received letters back. Another follow-up activity is to report on the event for local newspapers.

Why do we hold Author Day?

1. Enthusiasm is contagious. When other schools hear of our program, they ask to be included. A project of this kind brings together administrators, parents, teachers, librarians, and students.

2. The motivation for reading is authentic. When students know they will meet and talk to the author, they read with attention. They read with a purpose when they read to discover what questions they might ask the author.
3. The experience of writing for real audiences is a new one for most students. Correctness and clarity suddenly matter when you are writing for publication and to adults.

How do you organize an Author Day?

1. Convince administrators that it is a good idea. You will need their help (and financing).
2. Select an author. When you call, clearly state the age and interests of the audience. Define what you expect. How long should he or she plan to speak? Is the format to be a lecture, a panel, an informal question-and-answer session, or a combination? Discuss fees.
3. Compile a list of books by the author. Decide which ones you want students to read. Get help from your community and school libraries. Sometimes an author's publisher will help.
4. Make a reading schedule for students. Better readers may complete several books. You may want to read some material aloud to ensure the involvement of all students. As students read and listen, have them write questions they would like to ask the author on file cards.
5. Set up student committees to divide the work. Assign chairpersons and set deadlines. Typical committees include writers (publicity, invitations); artists (publicity, library and bulletin board displays, program design); reception (greeting guests, ushering); typing and mimeographing; refreshments (set-up and clean-up); questioners.

Two weeks before Author Day you and your classes should be ready to do the following:

1. Submit publicity to local papers.
2. Send invitations.
3. Print programs.
4. Send a letter to the author to confirm time and place. Include a map or directions to your school.
5. Ask students who will make introductions to rehearse before the class.

6. Organize the question period. Know who will ask what. Have a planned order of questioning to ensure that all those who prepared get a chance to ask questions. This procedure also avoids duplication of questions.
7. You may wish to videotape the event, make a tape recording, or take slides and photographs of students and author.

Our school has found that Author Day develops specific skills in an integrated way and with much enthusiasm. It is obvious to the entire community that students are developing reading, writing, and speaking skills. Public interest in Author Day helps to develop good school and community relations.

I have a videotape of Author Day in 1977 that includes four authors talking about their books and writing: Jane Langton, Betty Cavanna, Georgess McHargue, and Michael Roberts. I also have a list of over a hundred authors and illustrators and their addresses. You can reach me at the address below, just add the ZIP 01773. Of course librarians in your school and community are able to help you locate authors in your area.

Helen M. Greenhow, Brooks Junior High School, Lincoln, Massachusetts

# 4 Word Study, Vocabulary Development, and Spelling

Although many of the activities in this section might well have been placed in the preceding section, Sight Words and Reading, or in the subsequent section, Using and Making Dictionaries, they have been brought together here primarily because they encourage youngsters to think about a word as *word*—its configuration, its letter components and patterns, its meanings and uses—rather than merely to retrieve it from a storehouse of recognition words.

The first four activities are word games that may be played individually, in small groups, or with the class as a whole; the emphasis is on the letter combinations and patterns of individual words. **Grid Games** and **PRS Homes** place greater emphasis on meaning, an emphasis that continues for the next six activities. The section ends with suggestions for an individualized—and inexpensive—spelling program.

### Playing the X's

This game has been dubbed "Playing the X's" by my third-graders, but students in upper grades will also enjoy it.

Place a sentence on the board, but in place of the letters use only x's. Be sure to leave spaces between the words. Students then take turns guessing a letter in the sentence. If that letter is present, the corresponding x or x's are erased and replaced with the correct letter. A student who has correctly identified a letter is allowed to guess at the entire sentence, but students quickly learn to be careful. Guessing only part of a sentence correctly may give the entire sentence away for another student. This simple little game has more potential than is at first apparent, especially if you give some thought to the sentences you use. It's useful for those extra five or ten minutes before lunch or dismissal.

Candice Bush, C.P. Squires Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

### The Die Is Cast

Youngsters play this word game in groups of three or four. Each player in turn throws a die and tries to come up with a word containing the number of letters corresponding to the number shown on the die. The group decides if a word does not qualify. Accepted words are listed on a sheet of paper, and the group scores a point for each correct word. The winner is the group with the most points at the end of a stipulated time.

Vary the game by asking students to provide the number of rhyming words shown on the die or to supply words that contain the number of vowels shown.

Cardon Allred, J.E. Manch School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Word Scramble Ramble Amble

My sixth-graders enjoy finding words in words, but this game can be adapted to almost any level. It's certain to spark a new interest in words.

Write a word on the board from which students can make a new word by moving the letters around. All letters may be used or some may be left over. Then give a definition orally for the new word to be discovered. For example, write the word *now* on the board and give the definition "past tense of win." I have students write the new word on a piece of paper because we play the game as a contest, but students can respond orally or you can play the game as a team relay. For younger children use words like *pin* (nip), *team* (meat, tea, eat, mat, tam). For older youngsters try words like *members* (embers, sere), *learn* (near, lean, are), *example* (peel, peal, lax, ample).

Sherry Wilkie, Madison School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Spill and Spell Revised

This spelling game is appropriate for any grade level and works well near the end of a class period or when you want to work with an individual student or small group.

Appoint a secretary to write at the chalkboard. Using Spill and Spell cubes, "spill" one letter and have the secretary write it on the

board. Students give any word that contains that letter. "Spill" a second letter and have it recorded on the board; students now provide a different word, one that contains both letters. "Spill" a third letter, and give a third word containing all three letters. Continue in this manner until the class is stumped. Advanced students are doing a good job when they come up with a word using more than eight "spilled" letters.

The only rule is that once a word has been said, it may not be repeated. This stipulation keeps students from yelling out words without being called upon since their word has then been used and may not be used again.

Marti Swanson, Grant Community High School, Fox Lake, Illinois

### Grid Game

Here's a game that emphasizes vocabulary brainstorming. Write a word or phrase vertically on the left side of a grid. The size of the grid will be determined by the word or phrase you choose. The word can be seasonal, as shown below, but it does not have to be. Across the top of the grid write category labels: nouns, verbs, television shows, foods, plants, automobiles, ice-cream flavors. Students try to fill in each box with a word that begins with the letter on the left and also conforms to the category label at the top of the column.

| | noun | boy's name | TV show | Plant | verb |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | *ship* | | | | |
| P | *pond* | | | | *praise* |
| r | | | | *radish* | |
| i | | *Irving* | | | |
| n | | | | | |
| g | | | | *geranium* | |

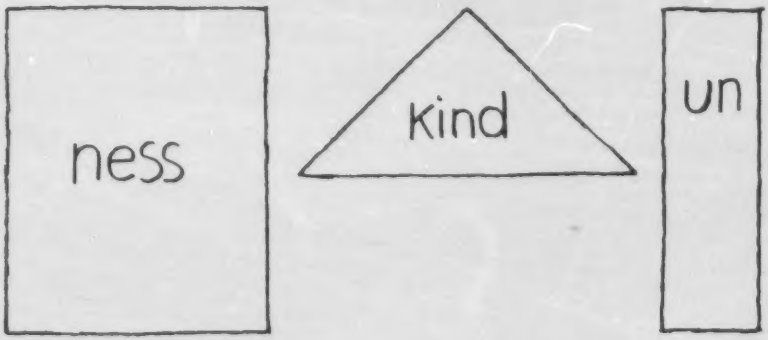
The grid game can be played by individuals for extra credit or just for fun, but we usually play with teams earning moves on a Chutes and Ladders board for filling the spaces correctly. Grids can be put on the chalkboard, on dittos, or on an overhead projector. Here are suggestions for the school year, but you'll come up with others that have special meaning for your students.

September—Welcome back, School daze
October—Halloween, pumpkin, ghoulish
November—Thanksgiving, turkey
December—Hanukkah, Christmas, mistletoe
January—New Year, resolution
February—Valentine, Washington, Lincoln
March—Leprechaun
April—Springtime, April showers
May—Vacation

Hope Goffstein, Laura Dearing Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**PRS Homes**

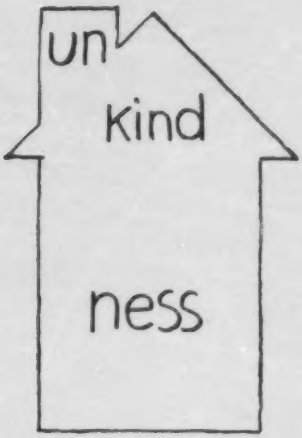
This manipulative activity can replace a more traditional worksheet to review prefixes, roots, and suffixes. Cut a number of squares from tagboard. The size depends on the age level you teach. Write a suffix on each. Cut an equal number of triangles, sized proportionately, and write a root word on each. Finally, prepare small rectangles with a prefix on each. For example:



Students construct as many houses as possible, using one prefix, root, and suffix. You'll want to prepare an answer key so that students can correct their own work, and remember that alternatives are possible—*unkindness* or *unkindly*, for example.

Houses will resemble the one below, and I've included a short word list appropriate for intermediate grades to get you started.

| | |
|---|---|
| en tangle ment | un kind ness |
| re fill able | dis courage ment |
| un time ly | un self ish |
| un sight ly | dis card ed |
| pre record ed | en camp ment |




Follow-up activities include writing a definition for each word, using each in a sentence, alphabetizing the words, and designing an original PRS home—or building an entire subdivision.

Sr. Louise Auclair, Notre Dame College, Manchester, New Hampshire

### It's in the Bag

Make, or better still have students make, word-matching puzzles.

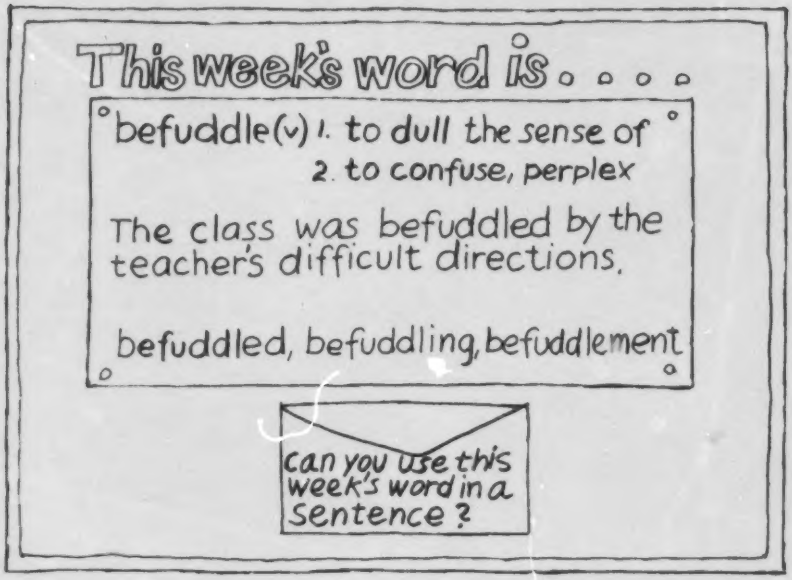
1. Cut relatively simple pictures from magazines, catalogs, and calendars or draw outlines of animals, flowers, automobiles, trees, geometric shapes, and the like.

2. Draw lines to divide each picture into several sections. These lines may intersect or go in any direction.
3. Print words to be matched above and below the same dividing lines. Puzzles can be made with synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, rhyming words, words matched to meanings, words matched to pronunciation respellings, words that go together (*bat* and *ball*), words that make compound words (*basket* and *ball*). Your puzzle should resemble the one sketched below.
4. Mount the picture on tagboard and laminate it if you like.
5. Cut along the dividing lines and store each puzzle in a labeled Ziploc bag. Since these puzzles are self-correcting, you'll find many opportunities to use them.
6. If you like, put the words for another puzzle on the back of a picture puzzle. This puzzle will be more difficult to complete, for there will be no picture clues.

Beth Whipple, Myrtle Tate Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Word of the Week**

A section of my bulletin board looks like this:


This week's word is . . . .
befuddle(v) 1. to dull the sense of
2. to confuse, perplex
The class was befuddled by the teacher's difficult directions.
befuddled, befuddling, befuddlement
can you use this week's word in a sentence?

1. On Monday we discuss the word and its derivatives.
2. During the week we use the word in class in various situations and students insert original sentences using the word or its derivatives in the envelope.
3. On Friday we share their sentences and nominate "Word-of-the-Week Winners." Selected sentences can also be used as a dictation exercise.

Kathleen Pszenny, Ralph B. O'Maley School, Gloucester, Massachusetts

**Pictures Worth at Least Twenty-Five Words**

Students can work in groups to make these puzzles for each other, but you will probably want to make several yourself to serve as models.

1. Draw and color a picture of a general subject that can be used to generate useful vocabulary words, for example, a forest scene with wildlife.
2. Mark off squares on the back of the picture and write a vocabulary word generated by the picture into each square: *forest, grove, leaf, leaves, hoof, hooves, trail, herd, feather,* for example.
3. Rule an identical sheet of paper into matching squares and write a definition for each word in the corresponding square.
4. Cut the picture apart, following the lines of the squares.

Students exchange puzzles and reassemble the pictures by placing each word facedown on top of the square containing its definition. These self-correcting puzzles may also be made by cutting up a poster or large picture from a magazine or calendar. You'll be surprised at the interesting and useful vocabulary that students "find" in pictures. It's also fun to send puzzles as "gifts" to another classroom, to trade puzzles with another class, or to send one to a member of the class confined at home or in the hospital.

Margie Ripplinger, Doris French Elementary School, and Mary Barbara Gnatovich, George E. Harris Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Concentration: Direction of Attention to a Single Object

Compile a vocabulary list appropriate to the level of your students, especially one that is related to a unit of work underway. If your list is long enough, you can have several games of Concentration underway at the same time.

Divide the class into groups of three or four students and divide the vocabulary list equally among groups. Give each group two 3″ × 5″ cards for each vocabulary word it has. On one card a member of the group neatly writes a vocabulary word. On another, a member neatly copies the pronunciation respelling and the definition of that word.

When all the groups are finished, collect and shuffle the cards. Place them facedown on the table in rows and columns as for Concentration. Each student in turn picks up two cards, hoping to make a match between word and definition. The dictionary can resolve disputes. If the cards match, the student keeps both cards but must first use the word correctly in a sentence. If the cards do

not match, the student returns them to their original positions on the table. The winner is the student with the most cards.

Linda Gregg, William E. Ferron Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Sloganizing

Here's an exercise that makes a point in an advertising or word study unit. Ask each student to clip a picture/slogan ad from a magazine. The student then cuts the slogan from the chosen ad, being careful to keep it intact, and pastes it on a separate sheet of paper. The picture portion of the ad is pasted on another piece of paper. Later, in class, students pass slogans in one direction, pictures in the other. The class then tries to match slogans with products. The exercise demonstrates vividly the sameness of the terms used by advertisers to influence buyers.

Verus Young, Lois Craig Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

### Blue Books and Pens: An Individualized Spelling Program

Each week, usually on Monday, I give each student a blue book with ten words written in it. I have taken the words from the student's writing during the previous week and from a paragraph that I dictated. I choose this paragraph for its interest level and because it offers a variety of spelling challenges. The dictation emphasizes listening skills as well as spelling and handwriting.

During the week students study their own lists and write an interesting complete sentence for each word. I give a small prize each week to the student who has written the most interesting, thoughtful, or amusing sentences. The use of the word from the spelling list must, of course, be correct.

Near the end of the week students pair off, exchange blue books, and quiz each other. I try to keep pairs relatively equal so students have no difficulty reading each other's lists.

This spelling program combines penmanship, sentence writing, creative thinking, peer interaction, and challenging individualized word lists for each student. Best of all, it costs no more than a set of blue books.

Rosalys B. Wilson, Dedham Junior High School, Dedham, Massachusetts

# 5 Making and Using Dictionaries

"To make dictionaries is dull work," noted Samuel Johnson in the preface to his dictionary. But your students are likely to disagree when they've tried their hands at the cut-and-paste dictionary, the tired word dictionary, the homonym dictionary, the dictionary of superstitions, and the dictionary of things to do. There are also activities to introduce alphabetizing, the use of guide words, and the decoding of diacritical markings.

## Dachshund ABC

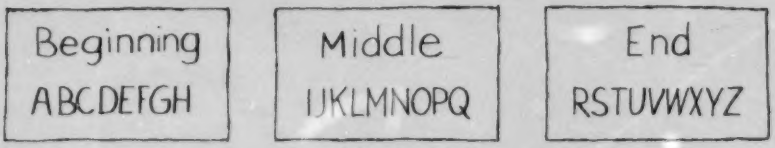
Cut the dog ends and alphabet cards shown below from tagboard. Then have the children put the cards in alphabetical order to form the body of the dog.

For more advanced students, write words to be alphabetized on the body segments. Get tricky: use only words beginning with the same letter—aunt, age, after, any, angel, ape, apple.

Kathy Huse-Inman, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pierre, South Dakota

**Alphabet Shuffle**

After first-graders have learned their ABC's, divide the alphabet into three sections labeled beginning, middle, and end. Make a tagboard label for each section (or use the chalkboard) as shown below.



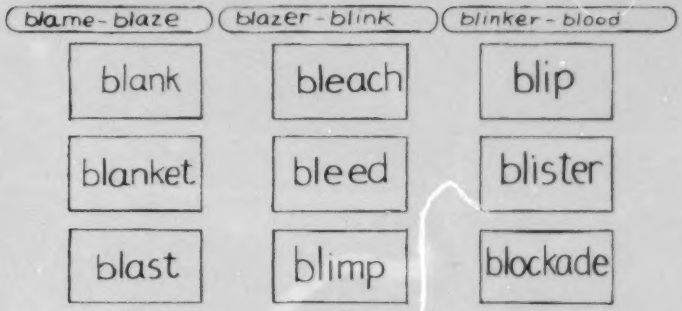

Choose three students whose first names begin with letters that represent the three categories. Ask each youngster in turn what letter comes first in his or her first name. Then ask the student to move to the appropriate section of the alphabet. After this demonstration, categorize the class by first names. When everyone is in a beginning, middle, or end category, reshuffle by using last names. If there's time, use middle names, names of pets, or street names.

Now teach for transfer. Hold up a dictionary and explain that it is divided into three sections, too. Demonstrate by asking for words and categorizing them first with the beginning, middle, end labels and then showing in which third of the dictionary they are found. As time goes on, students will open the dictionary to the correct third without starting their word search at the first page.

Ann Redemann, Halle Hewetson Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Guide Words Were Made to Be Used**

Students so often ignore the time-saving guide words in the dictionary. Here is an activity that helps them understand how to use them. You'll need tongue depressors, index cards, and a dictionary. Write pairs of guide words on three or four depressors. Then use the index cards to make a set of a dozen or so words that can be sorted according to the guide words and later alphabetized. If you code the answers on the backs of the cards, the exercise is self-correcting. For example:




Diane Ng, Helen Marie Smith Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

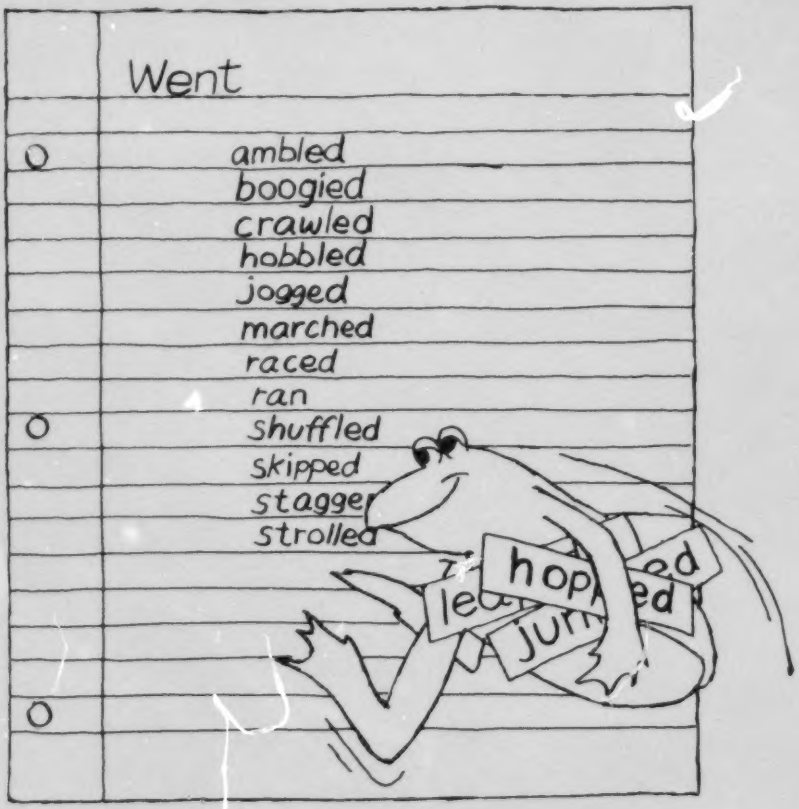
### Cut-and-Paste Dictionary

My first-graders enjoy making picture dictionaries. Collect in advance newspapers (especially the Sunday comics), magazines, coloring books, catalogs, junk mail—any disposable illustrative material. Each youngster finds and cuts out the letters of the alphabet, gluing each to a page. Both upper- and lowercase letters may be shown. Several pictures may then be used to illustrate a given letter. Sometimes students create category dictionaries—animals, foods, clothing, toys and games.

Larry Pilon, Marion F. Cahlan Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

### Tired Word Dictionary

Youngsters enjoy making books. When we are beginning creative writing, we make a dictionary of "tired" words. I write an overused word on the board, and students contribute words they could use instead. For example, *went* in "Mike went down the road." When we have run out of ideas, we create the "went" page for our tired word dictionary by listing the fresh, new words in alphabetical order. A sample page follows.




We keep the pages, arranged alphabetically, in a notebook and when we discover another tired word, we create a fresh page. In effect, we are making our own thesaurus. This activity helps in creative writing, but it also expands the young child's vocabulary.

Nancy Hest, Lois Craig Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

**Dictionary Builders**

Instead of using standard vocabulary lists, I sometimes ask students to create their own dictionaries. Each student chooses a book from his or her independent reading and selects a given

number of words from it. After I've checked their lists, students look up the words in the dictionary and copy syllabication, definition, and part of speech. They also write sentences for an agreed-upon number of words.

Now they are ready to make dictionaries. With the usual supply of fabric, wallpaper, and cardboard, we make books and copy the dictionary work into them. Students copy their work onto the pages before binding them to avoid dismantling the books when mistakes are made. Many students make dictionaries in sizes and shapes that suggest the books from which they took the words. I have had books shaped like baseballs, ice-cream cones, and haunted houses. Most youngsters enjoy illustrating their dictionaries, but those shy about drawing find pictures in magazines and neatly cut and paste them into their dictionaries.

I have found that when students are allowed to pick a book with which they are comfortable, they take great pride in their work. This project provides practice in using the dictionary, expands vocabularies, and is a pleasant experience for those who enjoy making books but are not particularly strong in creative writing.

Susanne Whitbeck, Andover Elementary School, Andover, New Hampshire

### From Black Cats to Sidewalk Cracks

Around Halloween my students compile a dictionary of superstitions. We collect all the superstitions they have ever heard, including their meanings and origins if possible. We add to the collection through interviewing people and from books. Illustrations are the last step in producing a fascinating and attractive book.

Ruth A. Mills, C.V.T. Gilbert School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

### Dictionary of Things to Do

Help students to compile a *Just for Kids* dictionary that lists the child-oriented facilities within the community or immediate area. This dictionary may include a "fun for free" section as well as businesses such as video arcades, skating rinks, and theaters. Students may provide directions for each listing, a map on which all listings are located, expenses, business hours, phone numbers, and

the like. My fifth-graders enjoy this activity but the type of information will, of course, vary with the grade level of the compilers.

Shana Turner, George E. Harris Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Homonym Helper

Some youngsters have difficulty using and spelling homonyms correctly, but almost all of them enjoy collecting and considering them. So I came up with the idea of a homonym dictionary. I pass out unlined, three-hole notebook paper and brads to hold the booklet together. Students design covers appropriate to the contents and to their own personalities. I explain that the booklets must be brought to class daily for the next few weeks because they will be used daily.

Every day when students come into my room they find on the chalkboard that day's set of homonyms, for example, *great* and *grate*. These are the words that they enter into their booklets that day, providing an interesting sentence and illustration for each. Dictionaries are available for verifying meanings about which students are uncertain. I have noticed that many students are curious to see what each day's homonyms will be and look for them almost immediately as they enter the room. They especially enjoy relatively unfamiliar pairs. Of course they know *plum* but many do not know *plumb*; *done* is familiar but *dun* will send them to the dictionary.

Besides enjoying the challenge of compiling interesting entries for each homonym, students are creating a personal resource for tricky words, and I encourage them to take care with the spelling and punctuation.

Judy Cromett, Lewiston High School, Lewiston, Minnesota

### Diacritical Diagnoses

Many students have genuine difficulty decoding diacritical marks. I have found this nonthreatening activity to be a help to many. You need several dictionaries, preferably a class set, with a pronunciation key that is easy to interpret.

Begin by reviewing the use of the pronunciation key, giving examples of words that contain the sounds represented by the diacritical marks. Introduce the activity by writing a sentence on

the chalkboard, spelling the words according to the pronunciation key given in the dictionary the class is using. Now ask each student to write a sentence, spelling each word in the manner of the pronunciation key. Students should write the words first with only the help of the key; then they may check them against the individual entries in the dictionary.

After students have worked out their sentences, they copy them neatly on strips of paper. Sometimes I make a quiz game from the sentences by numbering them and posting them on the bulletin board. Students try to transcribe each sentence, this time spelling all words correctly. Sometimes I ask each student in turn to hold up a sentence and call for volunteers to read it correctly.

Students seem to have fun working out the pronunciation of words they may not have known prior to decoding their classmates' sentences, and they discover that dictionaries really are useful tools. Perhaps the biggest benefit is that the fear of mispronouncing words is reduced as students learn to make accurate diacritical diagnoses.

Kim M. McLaughlin, St. Austin's Grade School, Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Mathemadness**

Sometimes new subject-matter terms, especially in math, intimidate youngsters. I suggest, therefore, that we make a dictionary of such words in language arts class.

Begin by having students alphabetize a preselected list of terms, or add to the dictionary throughout the semester. Students and teacher together then create daffynitions for each word. Allow your imaginations to run rampant. The field work begins when you amass the true definition. Your labors are now ready for the printed page. I use the following format, with terms in alphabetical order:

Unfamiliar term. 1. Daffynition 2. Definition

Here are two examples from a dictionary produced by my fifth-graders.

> **octagon.** 1. October's gone. 2. A polygon having eight angles and eight sides.
>
> **parallel lines.** 1. A pair of Lell lions. 2. Two lines lying evenly in the same direction but never meeting.

Donald Grosenick, Halle Hewetson Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

# 6 Writing

Activities in this section suggest ways to motivate young writers and engage them at the prewriting stage. There is a relaxed and spontaneous approach, time for talk, opportunity for sensory exploration, room for verbal experimentation. Many of these assignments might later be reworked, revised, and edited to create fuller and more complex treatments.

The four activities that conclude this section are certain to take the groans out of poetry assignments. There are six-foot poems, poems that bubble out of Bromo-Seltzer tablets, and cinquain in the first grade.

### Cliff-Hangers in the Classroom

Elementary students enjoy these two writing assignments, which seem to produce stories that everyone enjoys sharing.

For the first, you will need a supply of coat hangers and long pieces of paper. I give instructions that go something like this: "Write the beginning of an exciting story on the piece of paper. Don't finish the story! Stop right at the exciting part. Now fasten the piece of paper on a coat hanger and hang your story in a place where someone else can finish it. You finish another person's cliff-hanger."

You'll need to prepare for the second when students are out of the room. Tape a trail of large, three-toed footprints on the floor, over tables, up the wall, across the ceiling—be imaginative. End the trail at an open window. Then leave a few clues—an empty milk carton, candy bar wrappers, orange peelings—or clues of your own sinister devising. When students return, ask them to be detectives and observe the footprints and other clues. Then they write stories using as many clues as they can find. Encourage them to describe the intruder, to tell why it was in the classroom, to decide where it went.

Douglas E. Knight, Dike-Newell School, Bath, Maine

### Jabberjabberjabber

I find these three exercises useful in creative dramatics, but I suspect they'd prove fun in almost any language arts class at almost any grade level and might serve as useful prewriting activities.

Hold up an object—almost any object; everyone must talk about it nonstop and simultaneously. After several seconds, replace it immediately with another—and the talk goes on. Only one rule: Students may not stop talking about the object before them.

Divide the class into groups of four to six and sit in small circles. Announce a topic. Person A in each circle begins to talk to the others nonstop on the topic. When you give a signal, person B immediately begins talking. When each member of the circle has had a turn, announce a new topic and repeat the activity. Again, only one rule: Don't stop talking. Suggested topics: corners, little things, big things, buildings, butterflies, dirty socks, grandma's house, Jello.

Create a think wheel by asking students to sit in a circle. Dim the lights if you wish and ask students to close their eyes and relax. Pronounce a word—*morning*, for example. Each student in turn says the first word that comes to mind, continuing for a full turn of the wheel. Other words to try: friends, love, beauty, scary, childhood, magical, darkness.

Jeff McLaughlin, Intermediate Unit 13 School, East Petersburg, Pennsylvania

### Vegetable Vagaries

In the fall about the time of our first hard frost, I ask my fourth-graders to bring in a vegetable from their gardens. Youngsters whose families do not have gardens can usually find a potato, a carrot, or an onion at home or use an extra vegetable brought by a friend.

The day the vegetables arrive, our attention centers on our harvest. Each child spends time carefully examining his or her vegetable—color, texture, shape, size. Does it resemble anything else? How does it grow? How is it cooked? Do you like to eat it? After thinking about these questions, each child writes a biography of the vegetable. The personality and adventures developed for each vegetable are limited only by the child's imagination.

Ann F. Smith, Comiskey School, Northfield, Vermont

**Put Yourself in My Shoes**

Provide an opportunity for students to project themselves into another's shoes, to be someone else for a few minutes. I draw outlines of a variety of shoes for my students to use to write stories on—sneakers, ballet slippers, football cleats, ice skates, hiking boots, bunny slippers. One of my drawings happens to be a cowboy boot, and on top of the boot I write, "If I wore this boot my name would be . . . And I would . . ." Students may complete as many shoes as they wish.

When the shoe fantasies are complete, I post them on the bulletin board, and we sometimes have a little discussion about these new personalities in our classroom. If you prefer, students may draw their own shoes for this assignment.

Sherry Wilkie, Madison School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Don't Fence Them In**

Take to the outdoors to help students refine skills of observation and descriptive writing. I've had success with these on-the-spot assignments.

1. Can you hear a scene? Visit a place in your neighborhood and jot down as many words as you can that will help us hear that place.
2. Can you feel a place? Fit yourself into a nook or cranny, indoors or out. Tell us in at least three sentences what it feels like to be there.
3. Find a natural object that speaks to you with beauty. Write a description that makes clear this object's significance to you.
4. Find two items outdoors and compare/contrast them: a stone and a leaf, a thistle and a bird, a candy wrapper and an acorn, a cat and a car, a telephone pole and a matchstick. How are they alike? How are they different? Now find a partner. Decide on two objects together. One of you writes the comparison—how the objects are alike; the other writes the contrast—how they differ.

Lois Schoeneck, Damon Runyon School, Littleton, Colorado

**Brown Bagging It**

I use this exercise to emphasize the difference between objective and subjective description, but it's a suitable assignment for descriptive writers at almost any grade level.

Place in a brown bag for each student a variety of everyday items: an onion, a mothball, a piece of sponge, a burnt piece of toast, a shoestring, a feather. Distribute the bags and instruct students not to remove the objects from the bags or show them to anyone. Each student then writes a brief objective description of each item in his or her brown bag, a description in which the item is not named. To see how successful students have been, we take turns reading our descriptions to the class without, of course, opening the bags until all guesses have been made.

In the second part of the exercise, students adopt the viewpoint of one of the objects in their bags and describe a typical day in its life: A Day in the Life of an Onion, Burnt Toast Biography, Shoestring Saga.

Elizabeth Pedicord, Canton South High School, Canton, Ohio

**Sound Assignment**

Records of sound effects (an individual sound effect usually lasts from ten to sixty seconds) are available at local libraries, but you can also record your own onto cassette tapes—sirens, squeaking doors, ticking clocks, tolling bells, chirping birds, an unnerving scream. Play *one* sound effect for the class. Ask students to listen carefully the first time it is played and to imagine the scene that produced that sound. In short, students should create in their minds a picture, a setting, and eventually a story. Ask them to concentrate on that scene and who is involved. Play the sound effect a second time. Now students write the story or vignette they have imagined. I usually allow about twenty minutes, but you may find students asking for more time as they begin to work out their ideas.

Debbie Rub, Audubon Junior High School, Los Angeles, California

### Beginning with Dialogue

I use this assignment with eighth-graders before they begin writing stories, but it is appropriate for a wide range of grade levels. As a result of this assignment, I think students include more and better dialogue and more accurately punctuated dialogue than had classes in previous years.

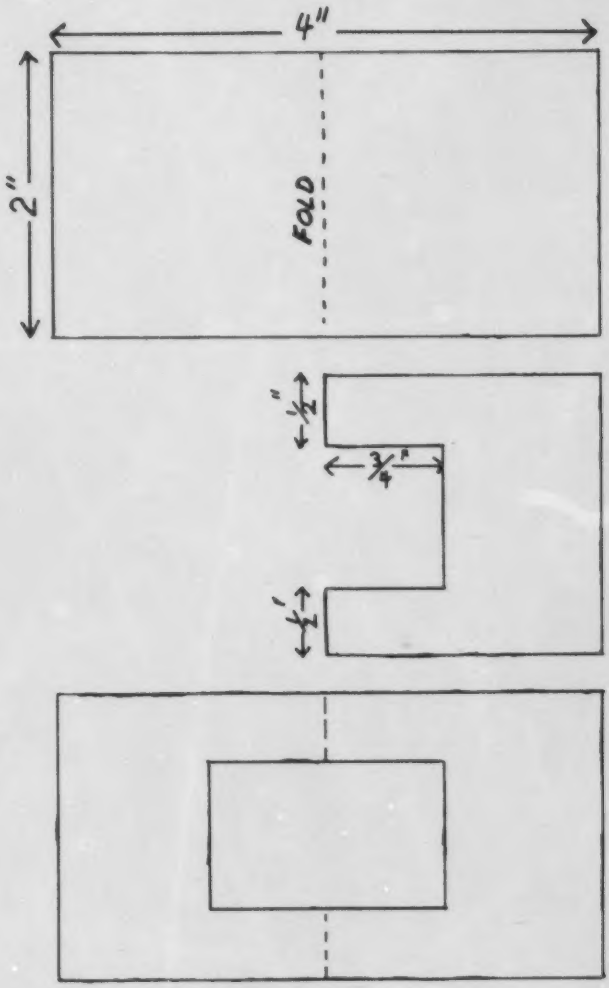
Each student chooses a person he or she wants to be—living or dead, real or imaginary, perhaps a character from a story or television show. Pair these "characters" in any way you choose. Each pair then carries on a written conversation, passing a sheet of paper back and forth, each student writing his or her line in the conversation instead of speaking it. Students get to play out a role as well as to practice writing and punctuating dialogue. Some of these conversations are later developed into stories; some merely serve as practice.

Anne M. Topp, LeSueur High School, LeSueur, Minnesota

### I Am a Camera

I find this activity useful in helping students identify main idea or theme, write descriptive detail, and sequence ideas. These are the instructions I give.

> *Step one.* Select a fairly large picture, color or black and white, that shows a scene that you like or dislike. Your theme is (the city at night, restaurant rush hour, mountain sunset, lonely beach, crowded beach).
>
> *Step two.* Make a "camera" with a strip of colored paper 2" wide and 4" long. Fold this paper in half crosswise and cut out a rectangle 1½" × 1". Your camera frame should be a small rectangle centered within a larger rectangle as shown below.
>
> *Step three.* Move your camera frame over your picture. Put yourself in the position of a photographer filming a story. Catch the sequence of your story so that a viewer will clearly understand what your story is about. When you are satisfied with the "shots" you have chosen, use a pencil to mark them out by positioning the camera frame over the picture and tracing the rectangle. You must have a minimum of five frames.
>
> *Step four.* Cut out these frames and paste them on a piece of unlined paper provided in class. Put them in a straight line and as close together as they would be found in a filmstrip.
>
> *Step five.* Describe each frame of your film in specific detail. Number those descriptions to correspond to the frames.




*Step six.* Now put your descriptions together. Add words and phrases so that your viewer knows exactly what you are trying to describe by the narration you have written. Recopy this "script" neatly.

*Step seven.* On "film day" each of you will have an opportunity to display your film and the accompanying text.

Marianna Lawler, Schalmont Middle School, Schenectady, New York

**Dear Ms. Dohrman**

Many times because of class sizes and busy schedules, we simply don't find time to listen to individual students. I have found a way of being a good listener through writing.

This past year I had a large third-grade class. We had studied letter writing, and students seemed to handle that form well. Talk time, however, always seemed limited. Youngsters clustered around my desk before school, wanting to talk and talk about themselves. The bell would ring, and I found I could give them no time. Before I knew it, they were off to other classes, passing from one room to another, one teacher to another, and never any time for personal talk.

One morning I suggested that they start a letter to me and place it on my desk. I told them they could tell me whatever was on their minds and that what they wrote would be confidential. I said that I would write back and they would find letters from me on their desks the following day.

To my surprise, my desk was overflowing with letters. I found out so many interesting things through those letters. I got to know how students felt, their concerns at home and at school. Their letters were filled with everything and anything, and I found many expressed themselves more freely on paper than orally. All in all, our exchanges were rewarding, and they certainly gave students lots of writing practice in a purposeful, constructive way. A word of caution: you may need to devise a timetable—three days' leeway, for example—in order to avoid disappointing your more prolific correspondents.

Joanne Dohrman, Greenvale Park Elementary School, Northfield, Minnesota

**First, Then, Next, Finally**

Our fourth-grade pod does a couple activities dealing with sequence and clarity in writing that have proved to be fun and valuable.

In the first, we ask each student to write down the steps in making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. The next day, we provide bread, peanut butter, jelly, and a knife. Each student gets to make a sandwich, step by step, according to another child's directions. For the sake of making a point, we require that they

follow directions literally. If the paper says "spread peanut butter on bread" but fails to mention using a knife, they can't use a knife. The kids have a good time and also see the importance of giving clear, exact directions.

Another day, we set up a small town in our room. Desks are pushed together to make "blocks." Certain desks are labeled bank, school, grocery store, town hall, etc. Streets are named and street signs posted. Each student then writes a set of directions explaining how to go from one place to another. We exchange papers, and every child walks through the town following the directions he or she received. The kids always think it's going to be so easy, and they are amazed at the care and concentration required to do it right.

Sandra L. Horn, Columbus Elementary School, Forest Lake, Minnesota

**Popcorn Sale**

If the teacher fails to provide opportunities for writing that result in purposeful communication, students tend to find writing a hollow experience and remain uninvolved. Many classroom activities, however, can be organized to include purposive writing. Here is how a popcorn sale provided opportunities for written communication in a fifth-grade classroom.

1. A class discussion on how to raise money for a particular class project led to the decision to hold a popcorn sale. Our first writing task was to compose a letter to the principal requesting permission to hold the sale, outlining the reasons for the sale, and detailing how the sale would be organized.
2. Then we needed to develop forms to be completed by class members with information indicating the contributions they would make to the sale.
3. Next we wrote up the results of an experiment conducted to determine the quantity of unpopped corn needed to produce a given quantity of popped corn.
4. A report outlining materials needed and estimates of quantities, expenses, and proposed selling prices was next.
5. Clear and accurate records of expenses and receipts were ongoing.

6. Advertisements, announcements, and notices to be displayed in school were another major writing project.
7. Finally, we produced a class book, *The Popcorn Sale.*
8. And a creative follow-up: Look for an opportunity to discuss the sensory impressions students have of popcorn. This could occur shortly after students have popped corn in the classroom to determine quantities. Discuss sensory appeals: hearing (the sound popcorn makes popping and being chewed), smell, touch (the way it feels in mouth and hand), taste, sight. List at the chalkboard words suggested by students that evoke the sensory aspects of popcorn, but give them freedom to choose the form their writing will take. For example, haiku:

   The sound of popcorn
   Rattles, crackles, spits with heat
   Edible battle

Diane Bewell, Child Guidance Clinic of Greater Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba

### Cereal Crunch

You'll need a collection of empty cereal boxes for this activity. Ask neighbors, students, and parents for help in advance. List the names of the cereals on the board. Pronounce and discuss them, encouraging youngsters to consider why cereals are named as they are. Ask them to suggest new names for cereals and to explain their choices.

Each student then covers a cereal box with construction paper and creates a new cereal name and an appropriately designed box. If there's time, assign partners and share cereal inventions through television commercials written and enacted by students.

Phyllis M. Gies, M.E. Cahlan Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

### Once upon a Name

You'll need reference books that explain name derivations; for example, Basil Cottle's *Penguin Dictionary of Surnames*, Elsdon C. Smith's *New Dictionary of American Family Names*, or George R.

Stewart's *American Given Names: Their Origin and History.* Each student studies the history of his or her name—given names and surnames when possible. Using these ideas, the child makes up a story of how that meaning came to be. This can be written as a personal tale, a myth, or other narrative form. When stories are complete, students make them into books complete with illustrations and laminated covers. These make lovely gifts for parents on a special occasion.

Jeanne Hartmans, Paul E. Culley Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Mail Call**

This ongoing classroom project helps students master correct letter forms and provides a variety of experiences in writing and evaluating friendly and business letters.

Decorate a large cardboard box to resemble a U.S. mailbox. Introduce correct letter forms and post models of both friendly and business letters near the "mailbox."

Each student writes a letter, folds it, and correctly addresses the folded letter, which is then dropped into the mailbox. On stipulated days I appoint a letter carrier, who removes the letters and delivers one to each student who has mailed one. The receiver reads and evaluates content and letter form. The reader may also make comments to the writer—or write a letter in return—and the most interesting letters are often shared with the class.

Sometimes I use this assignment weekly; sometimes less frequently. Letters may also be assigned as homework, as may responses. Only the instruction by the teacher, the delivery of the letters, and the sharing of comments and contents need take place in class.

Lots of practice is necessary if students are to master letter forms, but I have also found that students write more interesting letters when they know their readers will be other students rather than a teacher. Letters also involve descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive writing—all forms of writing that students in the upper elementary grades need to begin using.

Finally, here are suggestions for letters that have proved successful in my classes. You and your students will, I know, come up with many others.

Write a letter

1. to your teacher, suggesting that students be allowed to celebrate "Labor Day" each month
2. to a friend, describing what you saw or how you felt (or what happened to you) on a five-mile bike ride
3. from one character in a novel or short story to another, discussing a problem related to the story
4. to a friend in the East, telling about striking it rich in the California Gold Rush
5. to Christopher Columbus, asking to sail with him to India
6. to the Walt Disney Studios, describing a cartoon character you have created and want them to buy
7. to a witch, inviting her to your Halloween party
8. from Big Foot, ordering a new pair of shoes
9. to Smokey the Bear, congratulating him for his good forestry work
10. to Jack Frost, complaining about the trouble his last visit caused
11. to Santa Claus, asking him to visit an old person who needs many things
12. from the Old Year, bragging about how he or she handled problems during his or her term in office
13. from a prophet, telling what he or she thinks will happen during the coming year
14. to a space hero, asking to go along on the next mission
15. to a parent or relative, describing the view from a balloon
16. to Cinderella's stepmother, applying for Cinderella's job after the wedding
17. from the tiger in one cage to the tigers in another cage
18. from a fish, requesting the mayor to clean up the lake water
19. to a former United States president, commenting on an action that he took during his term
20. to a scientist, asking for help on a problem you are having with your new invention
21. from a leprechaun in America, telling his Irish cousin about the unlucky things Americans do
22. to a museum curator, asking for an identification of a bone you have found
23. to the author, telling how his or her book might have been improved (should have ended)
24. from your pet (or younger brother or sister), asking for better treatment
25. to Peter Pan, requesting permission to live in Never-Never Land

26. to Mr. Webster, telling of a word you have made up to go in the dictionary
27. to your teacher, describing a perfect summer vacation

Polly Duncan, Tanglewood Middle School, Greenville, South Carolina

### Pictures *and* a Thousand Words

Fourth- through sixth-graders enjoy writing stories and assembling books inspired by magazine pictures. My instructions go something like this:

> Page through several magazines, tearing out a collection of pictures that appeal to you. Next, spread out these pictures, letting them suggest characters, settings, plots—ways they might fit together to tell a story. Discard or add pictures if you want. Now write the story suggested to you by your pictures. Proofread and revise until the story pleases you.
>
> Now comes the bookmaking fun. Decide on the color of paper you want to use for your book, its format, the kind of script, the placement of writing and pictures on each page. I'll be giving some special instructions as we assemble our books together in class.

Results are delightful, creative, surprise-on-the-next-page books that can be shared through the library or by loaning them to other rooms.

Dorothy Wood, Highlands School, Edina, Minnesota

### Young Authors Write for Younger Readers

One of the best experiences I have had with seventh-graders was the writing of stories to be shared with second-graders, but I think fifth- and sixth-graders would also enjoy this project. This assignment was made in December and so Christmas stories were popular, but stories about other family traditions would be equally appropriate. I stipulated that stories must be original but could be written as prose or poetry. We also talked about appeals to the senses, all five of them.

Prior to writing, students brought in favorite stories from early childhood, and I secured stories recommended by a second-grade teacher. For several periods, we shared these stories, talking about the level of the writing and appeals to the senses. We also examined

the illustrations. We read "Twas the Night before Christmas." To illustrate how one piece of writing can be used as a pattern for another, I read aloud two takeoffs that followed Moore's form and rhyme scheme but changed the content. Then we began writing.

I was amazed at the enthusiasm. Not one student complained, "I can't think of anything to write about!" Students wrote in class during the first week. During the next, they revised and illustrated their stories. Scraps of fabric, fur, old greeting cards, magazine cutouts, and paper of all kinds appeared as students created visual and tactile images. These illustrations made some of the duller and less successful stories fun to read, and weaker writers achieved a sense of accomplishment. Finished products varied widely, with stories about lonely children who received cuddly animals for Christmas, families reunited, holiday travels to grandparents, and some very original ideas like *Big Foot Has Christmas, Too.*

A second-grade teacher read all of the stories and selected those most appropriate for her class. My young authors then went to her room and read these stories aloud. It was, indeed, a successful writing experience for my students and for me. I teach in high school now, but I remember with fondness the joy and delight of this special group of seventh-graders.

Viva Sewell, Borger High School, Borger, Texas

About six weeks before school closes, my sixth-graders write books for the first-graders in our school. This is the plan I recommend.

1. Ask the first-grade teacher for the spelling or vocabulary words she has used with her class during the entire year. Reproduce a copy for each student.
2. Ask your librarian for about twenty-five picture books for the sixth-graders to examine and discuss.
3. Schedule a time when you will have at least one hour for the project on three consecutive days.
4. Begin by handing out the word lists and discussing the picture books. Then distribute a large sheet of paper to each student. Students rule off the paper into ten or twelve squares —each square will become a page in their rough drafts. (I require books of at least ten pages.) Students then block out their stories in large, dark printing and active pictures. I encourage them to use words from the first-grade lists as

often as possible. I help them with editing, and each student goes on to produce a finished book that includes cover, title page, and numbered pages.

5. When the project is complete, we make an appointment with the first-grade teacher and my sixth-graders visit her room and read their books aloud.

Myra MacLeish, Oakwood School, Minneapolis, Minnesota

In addition to designing and completing their own children's books and sharing them with younger children, my students come to realize the elements of successful children's fiction: easy-to-follow plot, quick action, understandable characters, appropriate language, and colorful illustrations.

Here is a summary of how we proceed.

*Day one.* Discuss children's fiction; ask students to recall some of their favorite stories. Each student reads four children's books, either from the selection in class (I get about fifty books from an elementary school librarian for this purpose) or from their home libraries. Students then complete an evaluation sheet of about ten questions for each book; points covered include plot, characters, language, illustrations.

*Day two.* Reading and evaluating children's books continue. The four evaluations are due on day three.

*Day three.* Discuss what children have discovered about the books they read. Summarize the elements of good children's fiction. Collect the evaluations. Students begin writing their stories, which will be suitable for younger children. Drafts are to be completed as homework and brought to class on day four.

*Day four.* Demonstrate how to use a storyboard to organize the story and its illustrations. Emphasize that the pictures are merely sketches of what will eventually be the illustrations. The storyboard is only a rough draft, as shown below.

*Day five.* Students complete their storyboards, bringing them to me when they think they have them letter perfect. I encourage them to ask fellow students to read their work before discussing it with me.

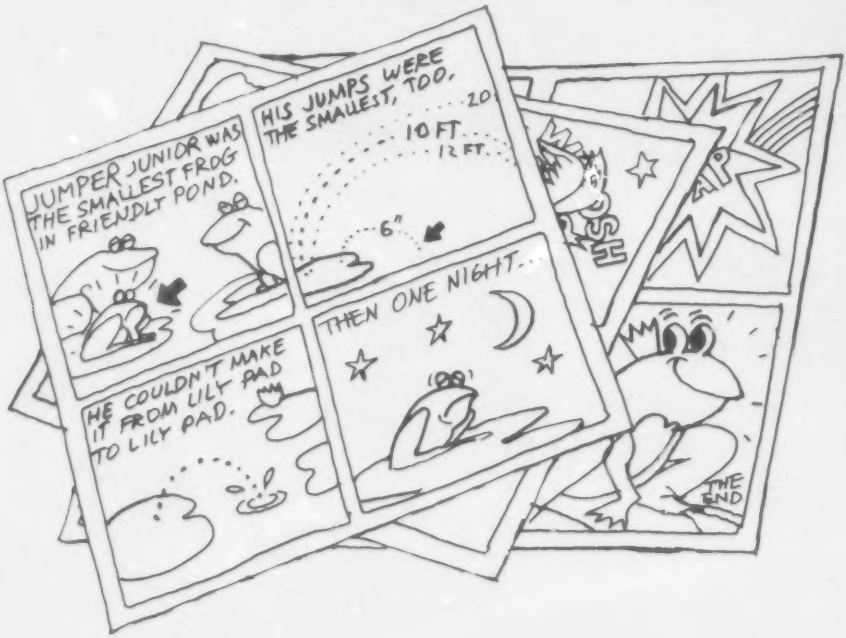
*Days six, seven (eight if they need it).* Students write their stories in book form and illustrate them in color. Allow plenty of time because good pictures require it.

*Day eight or nine.* Discuss the information found on a title page and book cover. Students complete title pages and covers for their

books. If necessary, books are completed as homework. They are to be turned in the following day.

*Day nine or ten.* Students read their books aloud, and the class votes for its favorites. Authors of books selected arrange with elementary teachers to share their books with younger children. A public library might also have a reading hour where students could share their books.

*Additional observations.* I don't require all students to do their own illustrations. They may ask another, better artist to sketch drawings for them to color. This tactic relieves students who hate to draw and encourages family and friends to participate in the project. Also, I don't allow alphabet books because they take too long to illustrate and are usually boring.




I hope this project works as well for you and your students as it does for us. After including it in my curriculum for several years, I now have parents and former students endorsing the experience.

Jill Tammen, Hudson Middle School, Hudson, Wisconsin

### Garfield Scores Again

I've set up a creative writing center to show students that there are many forms of creative writing besides the dreaded "write a story." In this center are twelve task cards to complete each month. I try to focus them around a monthly theme. For September I concentrated on Garfield the cat. One task card, for example, read, "Cat Chow, Inc., is going out of business. Invent a new variety of cat food that will save them from bankruptcy. Design and label the can, including the kinds of information usually found on cans." I saved empty cat food cans so that each student had a can to work with.

At the end of the month, we share these projects with the class. You'd be surprised how much these sixth-graders enjoy creative writing now.

Sherry Wilkie, Madison School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Six-Foot Poems

You'll need felt-tip pens, slips of paper about 1" × 3", and a long, long sheet of paper. Use shelf paper or tape together large sheets of paper.

Begin by choosing with your students a subject for the poem. If you've been studying the circus, for example, one of the animals or a special act might be appropriate. Then gather together on the floor in a circle.

Ask each youngster to think of a word that tells about the subject. Encourage them to think of "neat," exciting words—describing words or action words. When a child offers a word, write it on one of the slips of paper and give it to the child as his or her own word. Keep this part of the activity lively and ensure that everyone gives three or four words so that each child has a little collection of slips. Interrupt this step several times and ask each child to read his or her words to the group.

Tell the youngsters that they're going to glue their words onto the long paper to make a poem, *but first* . . . Ask a child to hand you one of his or her words. The group now thinks of a few words to go with that word. The new words are friends who go before or after the chosen word, so encourage students to put the chosen word sometimes at the beginning, sometimes in the middle, and sometimes near the end. For example:

Topic: elephants

Word: wrinkled

Phrases or word friends: wrinkled gray ears (beginning); funny wrinkled skin (middle); like a huge prune, wrinkled (end)

Try to limit the phrases to three or four words.

Beginning at the top of the long paper, write the phrase in big letters. When you are ready to write the chosen word, ask the "owner" to glue it to the paper in its proper position. Repeat for each word, gluing it to the long paper as you write the rest of the phrase. After two or three phrases, ask students to read the emerging poem. Stretch out the words and phrases to cover the length of the paper. Vary the colors used in writing if that seems appropriate to the topic. Finally, hang the six-foot poem on the wall. Youngsters may want to provide illustrations for it.

Don Howard, Miles Laboratory School, Tucson, Arizona

**Kaleidoscopic**

This writing activity can be adapted for any level of instruction and for a variety of end products, especially poetry. You'll need Bromo-Seltzer, food coloring (in drop bottles), water, a clear pie pan, an overhead projector and screen, a record player, and a few favorite records.

Ask students to jot down words and images that convey what they see and feel as they watch the screen. Place the pie pan on the overhead projector and pour some water into it. Add drops of various colors of food coloring. Every now and then slip a few Bromo-Seltzer tablets into the swirls of color. These create bomb-like explosions. Use your favorite record as background music and change the water often.

Jeanne Gerlach, West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia

**Cinquain in the First Grade**

First-graders enjoy poetry, but when they write original verse, their expression is often thwarted because of concern for rhythm and rhyme. Cinquain is a structured form of verse that keeps poetic thoughts and feelings moving without fretting over rhythm and rhyme.

A cinquain has five lines. Although there are several variations, I follow this pattern:

First line: one word that states the title

Second line: two words that describe the title

Third line: three words that express action

Fourth line: four words that express feeling

Fifth line: one word that is a synonym for the title

Initially, we write a cinquain cooperatively. Then each child writes a verse following the same steps. I ask students to work quickly without regard for spelling and spacing and invite them to help each other. When the cinquains are completed, the children are delighted with their own work and with the work of their classmates. I share this work with pride and pleasure.

Tonia
Eyes, face
Looking, thinking, guessing
Mixed-up, happy, ornery, curious
Me

—Tonia, age 7

Jaws
Mouth, teeth
Swimming, hunting, eating
Lonely, jealous, angry, mean
Shark

—Jason, age 7

Babies
Soft, cute
Playing, sleeping, eating
Hungry, cranky, content, happy
Kids

—Serena, age 6

Sandra Walker, Byron Elementary School, Byron, Minnesota

### Twelve Days of Halloween

I use this activity just before Halloween, but it can be adapted to other occasions. I begin by playing a record of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" and showing an overhead transparency. Of course an oral reading can suffice and a nicely illustrated text can be substituted for the transparency. We then talk about alliteration and repetition, noting the pattern of nouns and the verb endings. We also list together at the chalkboard some of the words commonly—and not so commonly—associated with Halloween. Students then write their own poems following the "Twelve Days" model. Here is an excerpt from the kind of poem your students will produce.

> On the twelfth day of Halloween,
> An old witch gave to me
> Twelve cats a-clawing,
> Eleven fairies floating,
> Ten goblins ghouling,
> Nine spiders spinning,
> Eight phantoms prowling,
> Seven skeletons shaking,
> Six Draculas drooling,
> Five glowing ghosts,
> Four calling kids,
> Three mean men,
> Two big "Boo's,"
> And a bagful of candy for me!

Eleanor McLaughlin, George Street Junior High School, Fredericton, New Brunswick

### Loverly

A story in the *Minneapolis Tribune* was the inspiration for this activity.

> She [Mrs. Jo Culnane] wanted people to know that eighth-graders have beautiful thoughts. So she asked them to write down the things they love. . . . Mrs. Culnane asked them to list up to 50 things they love in this world. Then she had them narrow it to 10. "The result was almost like a photo of each child," she said. "You could almost identify them by what they wrote."

Naturally we had to try this, too.

The Things I Love

Brand new puppies frolicking around,
The smell of baby powder,
The perfume Helen wears almost every day,
Going to the Y-deals knowing I probably won't get asked to dance,
But going anyway,
Playing with small kids when they get a big kick out of a piggyback ride,
The pen names wher you can write a story and no one knows who wrote,
Almost.

—Squimp

Susan Rietz, substitute teacher, St. Peter, Minnesota

# 7 Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation

Reassembling cut-up sentences and signaling correct and incorrect usage patterns with red and green cards are two of the sentence-sense activities for younger elementary students. Older students will enjoy **Plus Fours**, a game that encourages them to expand sentences as well as to become familiar with the functions of nouns and adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Punctuation pins allow younger children to handle—literally—punctuation while dialogue transcriptions provide opportunities for older students to practice punctuation skills. Punctuation pictures are enjoyed by students of any age—and by parents and teachers.

### Sentence Sense

Ask each youngster to make up a sentence and copy it onto a strip of tagboard, leaving space between each word. Next, the child cuts the tagboard strip between each word, including the period as a separate card, and scrambles the individual cards. Youngsters first reassemble their own sentence puzzles and then exchange puzzles with classmates. For very young children, cut zigzag lines between words, as in a jigsaw puzzle, so children have visual as well as logical clues in reassembling sentences.

Sister Jacqueline R. Verville, Notre Dame College, Manchester, New Hampshire

### Signal Cards

Children enjoy responding physically to questions. I use "flip-ups" when my first-graders practice usage patterns, but the technique can be used in many other ways and at more advanced grade levels. Give each child one green and one red card. I begin by reading a sentence such as "He gots my toy." If the sentence sounds right, students flip up their green cards, signaling that I

should go on to the next sentence. If the sentence sounds wrong, they flip up the red card, which tells me to stop; something in the sentence needs to be changed. At this point we find the error and correct it. Caution: agree that you will give a signal for flipping up the cards so that students take time to think about the sentence before responding.

Nancy Hest, Lois Craig Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada

**Punctuation Pins**

Create a set of punctuation pins by putting the marks of punctuation on clip-on clothespins. You'll need multiples. Print sentences without their punctuation marks on strips of tagboard. Students pick a sentence at random and punctuate it with the correct pins.

Kathy Huse-Inman, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Pierre, South Dakota

**Question Bee**

Practice using tricky word pairs with a question and answer technique. If, for example, students are drilling on the words *isn't* and *aren't*, tell the first youngster to ask a question using the word *isn't*. The student who answers it must use the word *aren't*. Like this:

> First student: "Isn't John coming?"
> Second student: "No, he's staying home because his friends aren't coming."

Vary the game by reversing the order: the first student provides a statement using one of the pair of tricky words; the second student asks a question that might have elicited that answer. This switch calls for some thought.

Betty Moore, Gordon McCaw Elementary School, Henderson, Nevada

**A Few of My Favorite Things**

Middle-schoolers and older elementary students enjoy this worksheet, and it brings up more punctuation and capitalization snags than at first seem apparent.

> Here is an opportunity to apply some of what you know about punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Indicate your personal favorite in each category and write a sentence about each of your choices. Use the first item as an example.
>
> 1. car Buick
>
> Our family hopes that Dad will trade in our old car on a new Buick.
>
> 2. department store
> 3. musical group
> 4. beverage
> 5. holiday
> 6. season
> 7. poem
> 8. television program
> 9. song
> 10. short story
> 11. movie star
> 12. girl's name
> 13. state
> 14. game
> 15. month
> 16. chewing gum
> 17. toy
> 18. baseball team
> 19. shopping mall
> 20. athlete
> 21. ice cream
> 22. newspaper
> 23. magazine
> 24. movie
> 25. cheese
> 26. city
> 27. theme amusement park

28. sandwich
29. comic strip
30. vegetable
31. bird
32. author
33. snack food
34. flower
35. restaurant
36. candy bar
37. cereal
38. school subject
39. jeans
40. sneakers
41. musical instrument
42. color
43. animal
44. Muppet
45. pen
46. singer
47. cookie
48. boy's name
49. shampoo
50. college team

Judith K. Smith, Largo Middle School, Largo, Florida

### Picture Talk

Pictures of people cut from magazines can spark ideas when students write character sketches and simple narratives. Here is a warm-up exercise that provides an opportunity for punctuation review. Ask each student to bring to class at least one picture of a person cut from a magazine. Assign partners and ask each pair to "join" pictures by creating dialogue. Each student speaks for the picture he or she supplied. Students transcribe this dialogue, using correct punctuation. Encourage partners to work together to achieve the best possible job of punctuation.

Kay Cornelius, Grissom High School, Huntsville, Alabama

### Halloween Handout

Here's an October sentence-sense exercise that students enjoy.

> Improve this story by breaking it into shorter sentences. You may add or cross out a few words. Punctuate all sentences carefully.
>
> One night when the moon was full a wicked witch and her black cat took off in search of the ingredients for a very special stew but her broom was not working very well that night and she knew she was in trouble when it began to buck and jump and she especially knew she was in trouble when her cat, whose mind she could read, started to think about jumping, because the cat knew the broom needed a new set of spark plugs and would conk out completely before long, but the witch couldn't do much about it except try to get down safely, which she did, but when she pointed the broom down,

> it picked up more and more speed and she didn't know if she could pull out of the dive if her engine quit but then she ran into this strand of thin rope hanging over the side of a cliff and the rope wrapped itself around the broom and stopped it but the witch and the cat both fell off and landed on top of a haystack, but that broke their fall and after they went into town and bought some spark plugs they were able to continue on their way, which they did, and they found their ingredients and made their stew and the witch put the cat into the stew and changed him into a prince who was every bit as ugly as the witch was.

Robert K. Williams, North View Junior High School, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

### Punctuation: Prelude and Finale

Lure unsuspecting students into studying punctuation by asking them to create pictures using only punctuation marks cut from construction paper. On an 8½″ × 11″ sheet of construction paper students paste cutouts of punctuation marks of any size to make a pattern or design; person, place, or thing. Over the semesters students have turned out some very clever punctuation pictures: a Model T Ford, a pirate, Popeye, Snoopy, a girl with pigtails, Mickey Mouse, the flag, a flower garden.

I've successfully used this assignment as a contest during an open house for parents, asking them to vote to determine the winning punctuation picture. At least three things were accomplished: my room was decorated; I was spared the difficult task of choosing a winner; parents had a pleasant memory of the English classroom and a topic to talk about with their sons and daughters.

To enliven punctuation review, ask the class to collaborate in the writing of a story. Students then tape the story with punctuation sound effects a la Victor Borge. You'll hear some highly imaginative sounds for periods, commas, exclamation points, dashes, apostrophes, and so forth—and students won't overlook a single opportunity to punctuate.

Virginia McCormick, Allen High School, Allentown, Pennsylvania

### Plus Fours

I use the following game when my fifth-graders are learning the parts of speech. It also helps them learn how to expand sentences.

Label four paper bags or other containers: *noun, verb, adjective,* and *adverb.* Give each youngster four slips of paper on which to write a noun, a verb, an adjective, and an adverb. Place each slip in the correct bag.

Divide the class into teams. A player from each team picks one word from each bag and constructs a complete sentence that uses the four words. The sentence is written on the chalkboard. The next player from each team chooses four more words and tries to add them to the sentence. The expanded sentence must make sense, although there is some latitude for whimsy and humor. For each correct addition a player makes, the team earns one point. Unused words are set aside.

When the class has run out of words, the game is over and the points for each team are totaled. If you like and if there are several words in the discard pile, run a final double-point round. A player from each team in turn has an opportunity to draw one of the discarded words and add it to the team's sentence. If the addition makes sense, the team scores two points.

Judith Fields, Elbert B. Edwards Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

# 8 Observing and Evaluating

Observation is often a more accurate way of evaluating the language arts skills of youngsters than traditional testing. **Projected Patterns, Learning Center for the Lazy,** and **Discussion Catalyst** are three activities that bring that principle into practice. Teachers have always known that when students review, important learning goes on—synthesis and generalization as well as mastery. A half dozen games—**I Have, Who Has, Tic-Tac-Toe, Bingo, Fishing, Kickball,** and **Baseball**—provide lively formats for the review of almost any kind of material. The section ends with a plan for a gala all-school problem-solving day.

### Projected Patterns

You'll need duplicate sets of identical objects for this activity: scissors, ruler, pencil, eraser, key, paper clip, for example. Arrange one set of these objects on an overhead projector and project their image on the screen. Give the class a minute to study the arrangement. Turn off the projector. Now ask several children to arrange duplicate sets of objects in exactly the same positions as the set they saw on the screen. Reduce the number of objects if the task is too difficult at first. Vary the objects and their placement, and give each child several turns. You sometimes discover youngsters who have difficulty with visual memory or spatial relationships.

Rosemary Holmes-Gull, Paul E. Culley Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

### Learning Center for the Lazy

Write activities on large sheets of construction paper or tagboard or cut out and mount pages from leftover workbooks and sample copies of texts. Arrange these on the wall (bulletin board, chalkboard—even the floor) and cover the whole thing with clear plastic.

It's sold in twelve-foot widths at hardware stores for about fifteen cents a linear foot.

Give youngsters overhead pens, plastic markers, or markers for white "blackboards" and let them tackle the activities. Work can be erased with an old mitten, towel, or sponge. Our class has sock puppets to do the job and an ear syringe to squirt a little water for pens.

You'll find that this scheme provides an excellent opportunity for you to observe a child's attack skills. The child's back is to you and he or she is unaware of observation.

Norma K. Smith, Ravena Elementary School, Ravena, New York

**Discussion Catalyst**

Ask students to prepare one to three questions they have after reading an assignment. Have them write these questions on the chalkboards prior to a discussion of the assignment. You should literally be surrounded by student questions. You'll find that this practice improves the quality and value of the discussion because you can quickly judge the depth of student understanding and the influence their attitudes have had on their perceptions.

William Speiser, Rumson-Fair Haven School, Rumson, New Jersey

**Time Enough with Tapes**

A tape recorder allows you to "clone around" in class. Record oral tests, drills, dictation exercises, lectures, and class discussions and you have an instant replay for absentees, for individual remediation and review—and for repetition of a quiz or exercise in other classes. Using the tape recorder helps you find the class time to help students individually, to keep records, to read student drafts. I find that I have fewer sore throats and that students' listening skills improve.

Susan Howard, Paxon Junior High School, Jacksonville, Florida

**Fishing for the Questions**

This simple format can be adapted for usage practice, spelling review, vocabulary study—almost any topic. Make at least one fish

for each youngster in the room. Write a question to be answered, a word to be spelled, a usage pattern to be incorporated into the child's own sentence, on each fish. Attach a paper clip and place the fish in a box. Children fish with a stick that has a magnet attached to one end. One child at a time lands a fish and answers the question printed on it. If the question is missed, the fish can be returned to the pond. Keep individual scores if you wish and declare a winner when all the fish have been caught.

Julie Anne Arnold, Rose Warren Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**I Have, Who Has**

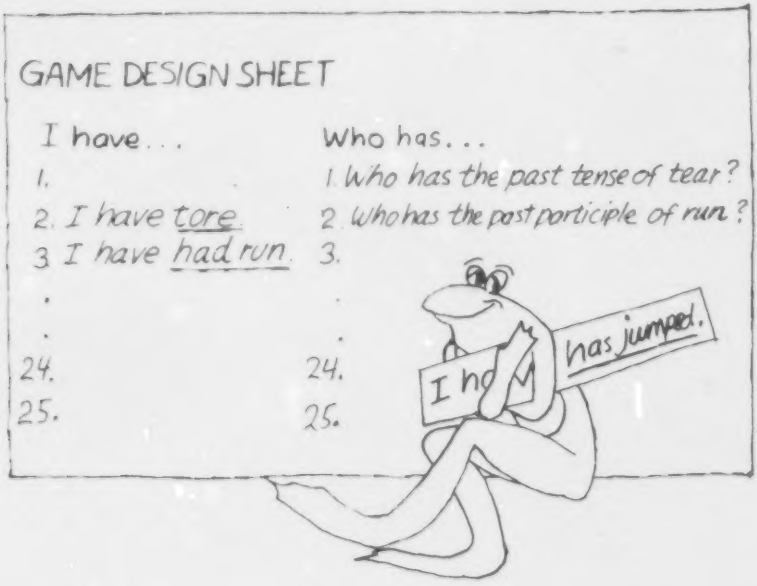
I borrowed this activity from a math teacher. It can be used to reinforce skills in any subject. Its greatest value lies in the fact that although each student holds only one card, he or she must listen carefully and think through every problem in order to be able to respond at the correct time. I have used the game successfully for grammar, vocabulary, and story content review.

The basic card design is shown below; as a simple example I am using verb forms. Notice that the "Who has" question on one card is answered by the "I have" statement of the next card.

| I Have Eat | I Have Tore | I Have Had Run |
|---|---|---|
| Who Has the Past Tense of Tear? | Who Has the Past Participle Of Run? | Who Has the Present Tense of Eat? |

To make the cards, set up the design sheet shown below. Decide on the size of the deck. Beginning with the "Who has" column, write your first question after number 1. Write the answer in the "I have" column after number 2. Write the next question in the "Who has" column after number 2 and its answer in the "I have" column after number 3. Continue in this manner until you have enough questions for the size deck you need. The "Who has" question on the last line is answered in the "I have" column of

number 1. Now copy the number 1 "I have" statement and the number 1 "Who has" statement onto the same card. Repeat for each card until the deck is complete.




To play the game, shuffle the cards and deal them out, one to each student until the deck is exhausted. (Two cards per student is sometimes more effective.) Choose a student to begin. That student reads the "I have" statement on his or her card, pauses, and reads the "Who has" question. The student holding the answer responds by reading his or her entire card in the same manner. The game continues until the first student answers.

Karen Kutiper, Alief Independent School District, Alief, Texas

**Testing with Tic-Tac-Toe**

I use this activity to help students master the use of *to, too,* and *two,* but the game can be used with *there, their,* and *they're; its* and *it's; your* and *you're,* and with many other kinds of content. There's no need for answers to come in sets of three.

Draw tic-tac-toe grids on the chalkboard and divide the class into pairs or small teams. One player or team uses the X; the other, the O. Decide which player or team will begin the game. Read a sentence that uses *to*, *too*, and *two*. The first player chooses the appropriate word. The correct answer gives that student the opportunity to place an X or O in a square of the game grid. If the answer was incorrect, the sentence goes to the other player or team. The winner is determined by the traditional rules of tic-tac-toe.

Diane Ng, Helen Marie Smith Elementary School, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Bingo Review**

I often use bingo games to review basic grammar, but the game can be adapted to any review for which you can devise a list of at least twenty-five items to be put on the playing cards: grammar and usage patterns, homonyms, synonyms, antonyms, character recognition, vocabulary and definitions.

My students call this game Bonus Bingo because I give bonus points on test day for "binges" earned on review day. (I keep a tally during the game.) Here is how I use the game to review personal pronouns.

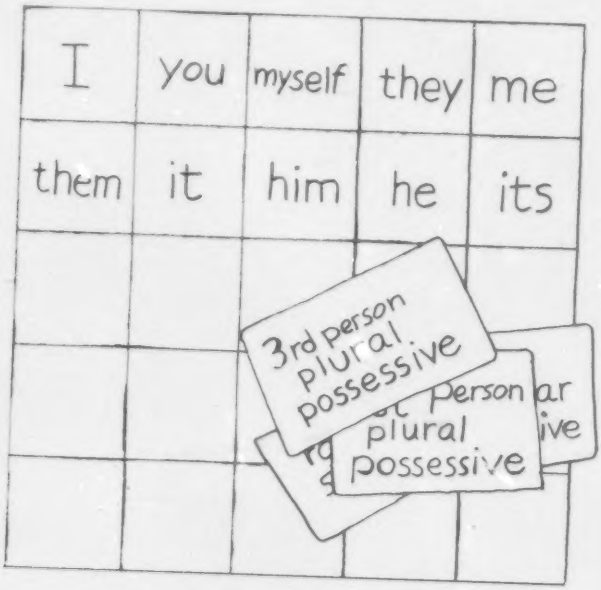
To prepare for the game, fill the squares on each bingo card with twenty-five answers, for example, pronouns: I, my/mine, me, we, us, you, he, she, etc. I've included a sample playing card below. Since cards take time to make, ask students to fill their cards from a list of pronouns on the board. Be sure the cards are filled randomly.

You'll also need to prepare a set of call cards that contain descriptions of each pronoun. Samples are shown below.

When everyone has a playing card, distribute a handful of markers to each student—cardboard squares or paper clips will serve. Call out a description of one of the pronouns from a call card drawn at random. Students who have the corresponding pronoun on their cards, cover that square—if they recognize the match.

When a student calls "bingo," others are asked if they qualify. Students must make this claim before I check the cards, and each bingo must include the *last* pronoun I described. These precautions prevent students from cashing in on someone else's bingo. Of

course, students may go ahead and cover pronouns missed earlier as I check the cards. We usually go on for several bingo calls before clearing the cards and beginning again.




Patricia Bjerstedt, Lincoln High School, Gahanna, Ohio

**Dual Purpose Kickball**

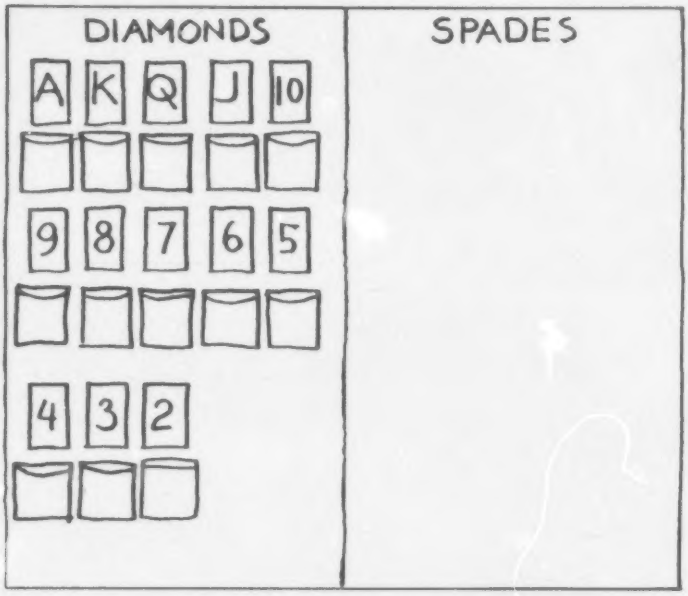
Use a game of kickball to review almost any kind of material—vocabulary from social studies class, the spelling list, factual material from an assigned story. I divide the class into two permanent teams. These teams play a regulation game of kickball, with one exception. Prior to each player's turn to kick, I ask a question from a list I've prepared in advance. If the player answers correctly, he or she may kick. If the question is missed, the student loses the opportunity to kick.

Verus Young, Lois Craig Elementary School, North Las Vegas, Nevada, and Patricia G. Houle, Andover Elementary School, Andover, New Hampshire

**Baseball Review**

This game can be used to review almost any kind of material from spelling to usage to literature. To begin, write at least fifty questions covering the material to be reviewed. Go through these and star the most difficult.

Next, staple or glue the diamonds and spades (in descending order) from a deck of cards to a sheet of poster board as shown below. Glue a small envelope (book card pockets work nicely) below each card and insert several questions in each envelope. Put the starred questions in the envelopes beneath the Ace, King, Queen, and Jack of each suit.




Now outline a baseball diamond on a sheet of poster board. You might decorate it with pictures of baseball players. At each base and at home plate paste two adhesive-backed picture hooks as shown below. Finally, cut about twenty two-inch squares of red and black construction paper and punch a hole in each.

To play the game, divide players into two teams—the red and the black. Place the other half of the deck of cards, divided into hearts and clubs, facedown on the table. Turn up a card from the pile that matches the color of the team at bat (for example, the seven of hearts). Pull a question from the envelope of the corresponding red card on the poster (seven of diamonds). If the student at bat answers the question correctly, his or her team records a base hit by placing a red square on the first base hook. All cards from two through ten score base hits. If you turn a Jack, Queen, King, or Ace, and the student at bat answers correctly, the team scores a home run. A team remains at bat until three students strike out by answering incorrectly. All players on base move when a student scores. For example, if there is a player on first, a player on second, and a player on third, and the batter answers a one-base question correctly, all players advance one base and the player on third comes home. If a student answers a question from the Jack through the Ace correctly, all players on base come home, including the batter.

Two sets of alternate rules change the pace of the game.

1. Teams may alternate in answering instead of switching when the team at bat has struck out three times.
2. Shuffle the hearts and clubs together. The team whose color comes up gets the question. Teams change at bat as the color changes.

Joan Fleischmann, Perkiomen Valley High School, Schwenksville, Pennsylvania

**Rather Than Grading Every Paper**

These options to grading every paper reduce the paper load but expand the writing experiences of students.

1. Provide opportunities for students to read their writing to classmates in large or small group settings.
2. Find audiences for student writing. Letters should be sent. Editorials should be submitted to school or local newspapers. Display student writing everywhere. Book students as guest authors to give readings of their work in other classes. Arrange for them to go in pairs to reduce intimidation.
3. Use journals as a place for students to explore experiences; later, relate them to more formal written assignments.
4. Intervene in the composing stage of student writing. It is then that the comments you ordinarily write at the end of a finished paper can influence the product you will receive.
5. Write with your students. Complete the assignments you give them. Among other benefits, you will discover unforeseen problems with assignments while there is still time to help students work through them.
6. Give the student the final choice of papers to be graded. Ask students to keep their work in writing folders. After they have written several descriptive paragraphs, for example, allow each student to choose the one that will be graded.

Leslie A. Kent, Longfellow Intermediate School, Falls Church, Virginia

**Problem-solving Day**

With a firm belief that meeting the needs of the gifted improves the curriculum for all students, I organized Problem-solving Day. I asked social studies, math, and science teachers to come up with problems for students to solve. These could be brainteasers or proolems more directly related to subject matter. We designated one day as Problem-solving Day and awarded prizes in such areas as most problems solved, best problem-solver in each subject, most persistent problem-solver. The interdisciplinary crosscurrents were refreshing, and students certainly learned the steps of problem solving.

Materials such as the following were useful: *Mind Benders* edited by Rob Nelson and Robin Smith (Midwest Publications), *Think Tank* by Dianne Draze (Dandy Lion Publications), *Scratching the Surface of Creative Problem Solving* by Ruth B. Noller and Ernest Mauthe (DOK Publishers), and *Making Waves with Creative Problem Solving* by Vaune Ainsworth-Land and Norma Fletcher (DOK Publishers).

Betty Schwermann, Chaska Middle School, Chaska, Minnesota

# 9 The First Five Minutes— and the Last

Begin a desktop file box of five-minute idea cards with these. Many of the word and letter games in preceding sections also are useful for getting a class to settle down or perk up. Add to your collection from newspapers, magazines, and professional journals. You'll be glad you did on a noisy Friday or a sleepy Monday— and your substitute will be forever grateful.

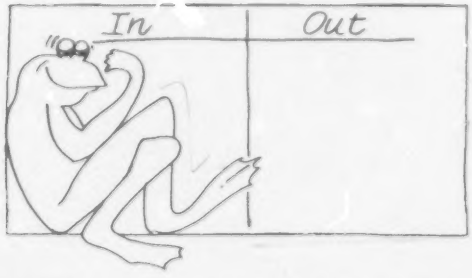
**Classroom Calisthenics**

An overhead projector works nicely for daily warm-up exercises. As students enter the room, their attention is focused on the overhead screen where an analogy, thought puzzle, or clozure exercise awaits them. I take attendance and they are ready to check the warm-up and begin class.

Susan Howard, Paxon Junior High School, Jacksonville, Florida

**In-group**

Here's a deduction activity for an odd moment or two. Put the following columns and heads on the board but give *no* directions:




Decide without telling the class what group will be "in" (green vegetables, for example). Begin by writing the name of an object

in that group under "in"; add another from that category. Now put an "out" word in its respective box. As soon as students catch on to what you're doing, they'll begin offering suggestions. Don't tell them what you're looking for; allow them to discover the solution themselves. Other categories I've used—objects through which one can see, students in the room wearing red, and categories appropriate to material we have studied in class.

Beverly Midthun, Ripplesside Elementary School, Aitkin, Minnesota

### In the Manner of the Adverb

When a few minutes remain at the end of a class period, we sometimes play this game. A student is chosen to be "it" and asked to leave the room. The class then chooses an adverb, *quickly* for example. When "it" returns, he or she asks members of the class to do something specific "in the manner of the adverb." "Erase the board," for example, "in the manner of the adverb." Or, "Smile, in the manner of the adverb." The student who is "it" continues to ask for demonstrations until he or she guesses the adverb.

I think this game gives students an understanding of adverbs as well as practice in getting up in front of the group. It also generates a class spirit since I participate in the game.

Betty Ford, Brecksville High School, Broadview Heights, Ohio

### Simile, Metaphor, and Psychoanalysis

Ask students to complete sentences like the following: "Are you more like a VW or a Cadillac?" Their response begins: "I am more like a . . . because . . ." The game taps thinking skills, produces some genuinely creative responses, and generates good humor. Here are a few other questions to try, but you and your students will come up with many others.

Are you more like a baseball or a football?

Are you more like a sneaker or a black leather loafer?

Are you more like disco or country music?

Are you more like Calvin Klein jeans or cutoffs?

Are you more like the sun or the moon?

Are you more like the Rocky Mountains or Daytona Beach?

In a variation, ask students to complete sentences like this one: "If I were a (flower) I would be a (rose) because . . ." Use a variety of topics: If I were a movie, sport, car, song, piece of furniture, item of clothing, food.

Karen Rugerio, Orange County Administration Center, Orlando, Florida

### Inflation

Here's a filler for a few leftover minutes or a journal entry: If you were walking down the road and saw a penny, would you *stoop* to pick it up? Why or why not?

Susan Rietz, substitute teacher, St. Peter, Minnesota

### Jim Dandy Name Game

Introduce at the chalkboard several names that are also used in other contexts, for example, an Indian drum (tom-tom) or a type of song sung at Christmas (carol). The examples that follow may be put on worksheets or used at the board. After a few minutes, share the answers as a group. Be sure to allow time for students to add to the Jim Dandy list.

1. short prayer said before meals (Grace)
2. absorbent fabric with uncut pile (Terry)
3. winner (Victor)
4. statement of what is owed (Bill)
5. sharp projection or hook (Barb)
6. flower (Iris, Daisy, Rose)
7. award for best movie (Oscar)
8. award for best television show (Emmy)
9. award for best mystery book (Edgar)
10. type of beef roast or steak (Chuck)
11. British policeman (Bobby)
12. wine of Spanish origin (Sherry)
13. sandwich of ground beef, barbecue sauce, and spices (Sloppy Joe)
14. tall grass (Reed)
15. to bring legal action (Sue)
16. quick down-and-up motion (Bob)
17. plant used in cooking as a seasoning (Basil, Rosemary)
18. Mafia leader (Don)
19. beam of light (Ray)
20. precious stone (Opal, Ruby)
21. flowerless, seedless plants with leaflike fronds (Fern)

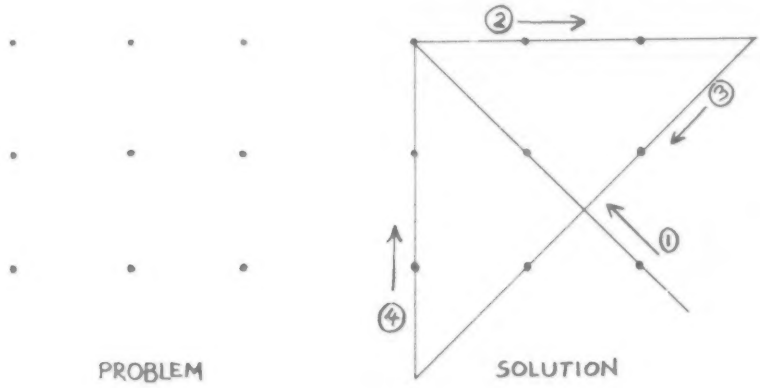
22. spearlike weapon (Lance)
23. abnormal growth within the shell of some mollusks (Pearl)
24. American flycatcher (Phoebe)
25. forthright and sincere (Frank)
26. thin nail with small head (Brad)
27. notch or chip (Nick)
28. shrub with thick, glossy leaves (Holly)
29. to flatten or shape with light blows of the hand (Pat)
30. pole used for fishing (Rod)
31. state (Virginia)
32. abbreviation for instrument that transmits sound (Mike)
33. legal document to dispose of property (Will)
34. 10,560 feet (Miles)

Sue Jarvis Rauld, Department of Defense School, Panama

### Creative Problem Solving

It was Albert Einstein who observed that "imagination is more important than knowledge." Brainstorming is a technique to generate as many alternatives or solutions as possible for a given problem. Do not stop to evaluate; this is done after all suggestions are recorded. (Why fly with the flaps down?) Too often, we encourage students to do things in a prescribed fashion. (Convention is the gravity that imagination must transcend. Encourage students to let their minds soar.) Take or make frequent opportunities for students to see things in new ways. Here are two examples.

1. Ask students to join all points on the grid in four straight lines without raising their pens.



2. Challenge the class with an object such as a coat hanger or an ashtray: what uses could you find for this object on a desert island? Each student draws up a long list in competition with others. Alternately, divide the class into groups, each group vying with the others.

After students get the hang of brainstorming, move on to tasks more closely related to specific language arts assignments, again listing solutions, evaluating them, and selecting the best. Assignments such as these lend themselves to brainstorming.

1. What other courses of action could a character in a story have taken?
2. Ask students to revise in several ways an awkward sentence you have written on the board: list, evaluate, choose.
3. How many words can students list that will serve in tired, overworked he said/she said constructions?

Nick Sopinka, Sheridan College, Oakville, Ontario

**Window on the World**

Clip a dozen or so pictures of prominent leaders/events on the world, national, or local scene that fit a theme: world leaders, sports professionals, television personalities, good citizens in our town. Number each picture but do not identify it and display the collection on the bulletin board with an appropriate title.

Encourage students during the following week to unravel the mysteries of these pictures, using the resources of newspapers and magazines at home and school and discussion clues from parents and peers. At the end of each week spend fifteen minutes (or longer) identifying the pictures and discussing their significance.

Vary the activity by dividing the class into groups of four or five. Give each group a minute to offer its hypothesis and choose a picture to identify. Continue with each group in turn until all pictures have been identified by the end of the week. Each group earns one point for each correct identification. Members of the group with the highest score are the news sleuths of the week.

Ann B. Holum, Excelsior Elementary School, Excelsior, Minnesota

# Title Index


A Few of My Favorite Things, 72
All the Words That Are Fit to Print, 14
Alphabet Feet and Vowel Fingers, 13
Alphabet Shuffle, 44
As the Wheel Turns, 25
Author! Author!, 31

Baseball Review, 82
Beginning with Dialogue, 54
Bingo Review, 80
Blue Books and Pens: An Individualized Spelling Program, 42
Brand Name Bonus, 23
Brown Bagging It, 53

Cereal Crunch, 58
Cinquain in the First Grade, 67
Class Map, 5
Class Tree, 2
Classroom Calisthenics, 86
Cliff-Hangers in the Classroom, 50
Concentration: Direction of Attention to a Single Object, 41
Consonant Chains, 19
Consonant Kangaroo, 18
Creative Problem Solving, 89
Cut-and-Paste Dictionary, 45

Dachshund ABC, 43
Dear Ms. Dohrman, 56
Diacritical Diagnoses, 48
Dictionary Builders, 46
Dictionary of Things to Do, 47
Die Is Cast, 35
Discussion Catalyst, 77
Don't Fence Them In, 52
Dual Purpose Kickball, 81

Exploring Four Inches, 28

Family Portraits, 26
First, Then, Next, Finally, 56
Fishing for the Questions, 77
Follow the Yellow Brick Road, 17
From Black Cats to Sidewalk Cracks, 47

Garfield Scores Again, 65
Grid Game, 36
Guide Words Were Made to Be Used, 44

Halloween Handout, 73
Homonym Helper, 48

I Am a Camera, 54
I Have, Who Has, 78
Icebreaker, 2
If You're Happy and You Know It, 24
Illuminating, 27
In the Manner of the Adverb, 87
Inflation, 88
In-group, 86
Interest Inventory, 11
It's in the Bag, 38

Jabberjabberjabber, 51
Jim Dandy Name Game, 88

Kaleidoscopic, 66

Learning Center for the Lazy, 76
Lifeline, 2
Long and the Short of It, 16
Loverly, 68

Mail Call, 59
Mathemadness, 49

Name Brain Drain, 4
Not Only the Names Have Been Changed, 30

Once upon a Name, 58

Peer Biographies, 10
Pen Pin Pan Pun, 14
People Bingo, 1
Pictonames, 14
Picture Talk, 73
Pictures *and* a Thousand Words, 61
Pictures Worth at Least Twenty-Five Words, 40

Playing the X's, 34
Plus Fours, 74
Popcorn Sale, 57
Problem-solving Day, 84
Projected Patterns, 76
PRS Homes, 37
Punctuation Pins, 71
Punctuation: Prelude and Finale, 74
Put Yourself in My Shoes, 52

Question Bee, 72

Rather Than Grading Every Paper, 84
Roses by Other Names, 7

Sampling the Consonant Blends, 19
Say It with Flowers, 23
Sentence Sense, 70
Show and Tell—and Write, 8
Signal Cards, 70
Silhouette Stimulus, 8
Simile, Metaphor, and Psychoanalysis, 87
Six-Foot Poems, 65
Skimmers, 28
Sloganizing, 42
Sound Assignment, 53
Spin and Spell Revised, 35
Storytelling Pencils, 27
Super Bowl Readers, 30
Syllable Race, 20
Syllable Stress, 21

Targeting Syllables, 20
Testing with Tic-Tac-Toe, 79
Three-Step Staircase, 15
Time Enough with Tapes, 77
Tired Word Dictionary, 45
Tomten Secrets, 29
Twelve Days of Halloween, 68

Up, Up, and Away: Balloon Day at White Bear Lake, 28

Vegetable Vagaries, 51
Viwol Chengos, 19

What's in a Name?, 6
Who's Who at School, 6
Window on the World, 90
Word Card Rummy, 24
Word of the Week, 40
Word Scramble Ramble Amble, 35

Young Authors Write for Younger Readers, 61